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ARTHUR SEGAL

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BY

ARTHUR SEGAL

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For Michael, David, Shira and Avigail

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Haifa, 1994 Arthur Segal

HISTORICAL-ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

In *Plutarch's Lives* there is a fascinating passage that tells us something about the extent of the penetration of Greek culture into the East. In the chapter on Crassus we read:

> While this was going on, it happened that Hyrodes was at last reconciled with Artavasdes the Armenian, and agreed to receive the latter's sister as wife for his son Pacorus, and there were reciprocal banquets and drinking bouts, at which many Greek compositions were introduced. For Hyrodes was well acquainted both with the Greek language and literature, and Artavasdes actually composed tragedies, and wrote orations and histories, some of which are preserved. Now when the head of Crassus was brought to the king's door, the tables had been removed, and a tragic actor, Jason by name, of Tralles, was singing that part of the "Bacchae" of Euripides where Agave is about to appear. While he was receiving his applause, Sillaces stood at the door of the banqueting-hall, and after a low obeisance, cast the head of Crassus into the centre of the company. The Parthians lifted it up with clapping of hands and shouts of joy, and at the king's bidding his servants gave Sillaces a seat at the banquet. Then Jason handed his costume of Pentheus to one of the chorus, seized the head of Crassus, and assuming the role of the frenzied Agave, sang these verses through as if inspired:
>
> "We bring from the mountain
> A tendril fresh-cut to the palace,
> A wonderful prey."
>
> This delighted everybody; but when the following dialogue with the chorus was chanted:
>
> (*Chorus*) "Who slew him?"
> (*Agave*) "Mine is the honour,"
>
> Pomaxathres, who happened to be one of the banqueters, sprang up and laid hold of the head, feeling that it was more appropriate for him to say this than for Jason. The king was delighted, and bestowed on Pomaxathres the customary gifts, while to Jason he gave a talent.[1]

[1] *Plutarch's Lives*, "Crassus," XXXIII, 1-4, Cambridge, Mass. 1967, pp. 420-423.

At once both enthusiastic and shocking in its depiction of the scene, this passage shows how Euripides' last tragedy was performed before the kings of Parthia and Armenia 350 years after it had been first presented in Athens in 405 BCE. The actors and, we assume, also the members of the chorus are Greek whereas the audience is Oriental but sufficiently Hellenized to enjoy the play. Two points are of particular importance for our purpose. One is that the tragedy is presented in a banquet hall at the palace; tables had to be removed to make room for the performers. Secondly, actors and chorus have been invited by the king of Armenia who, Plutarch tells us, was a true philhellene and greatly admired and appreciated Greek art and culture.

That the play was not performed in a theatre could of course simply have been because no theatre existed, either as part of the palace or in the city itself, but it could also mean that the only audience capable of understanding and interested in seeing Greek drama was limited to the members of the court, i.e., the ruling elite. Theatres by definition are public buildings intended for the masses and thus, one could say, clearly democratic in nature. They should be able to hold a large crowd, often thousands of people, offering each and everyone a comfortable view of whatever goes on on the stage. It follows that we will find theatres only in those cities that had such large audiences.

Moreover, for the independent Greek cities (poleis) building a theatre, apart from its cultural purpose, was above all an act of important social significance. The theatre expressed the spirit of the polis and, through the shared cultural experience of watching drama performances, served to heighten the sense of belonging of its citizens. Putting up a theatre structure, furthermore, required complex engineering skills and often a huge outlay of expenditure which the city had to provide out of its own means. Obviously, not all Greek cities could afford to build a theatre. In the Hellenistic period this changed somewhat since most cities now belonged to larger political systems which commanded huge resources, and initiative as well as funding for a city's theatre could now come not only from the city itself but also from the region's ruler.

Between the theatre as understood by the citizens of the poleis and the cultural experience of a small elite at the courts of the philhellene kings of Parthia and Armenia we already find little in

common. When we turn to the theatres of Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia we are confronted with again a different situation.

The theatres found in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia were built over a period of ca. three centuries, viz., between the latter part of the first century BCE and that of the third century CE. Most of them continued to serve their purpose until well into the Byzantine period.

Theatres were erected in four distinct regions, viz., the kingdom of Judaea, the Nabataean kingdom which stretched to the south and east of it, the Hellenized cities, and the area which fell under the direct governance of Rome. It is reasonable to assume, not only because of their different populations, that these theatres did not fulfill the exact same function in each of these areas nor that they addressed their audiences in the same language or even transmitted a single uniform message.[2]

In Roman Palestine west of the river Jordan we know at present of twelve theatres: Sepphoris, Dor, Legio, Beth-Shean (Scythopolis) (two), Shumi, Caesarea, Samaria (Sebaste), Shechem (Neapolis), Antipatris, Jericho, and Elusa. East of the Jordan we know of eighteen others: Sahr, Philippopolis, Kanawat, Hammat-Gader, Gadara (two), Abila, Adraa, Bosra, Pella, Gerasa (two), Birketein, Philadelphia (two), Petra (two), and Wadi Sabra (see fig. 1). These figures are not final since one may assume that still other theatres will be uncovered.[3]

---

[2] As yet, very little attention has been given to theatres as complete cultural complexes. Studies dealing with Roman architecture or historical surveys of various cities, e.g., Beth-Shean or Caesarea, while mentioning their theatres, often fail to define their place within the spiritual and material culture of Ancient Palestine and its different Jewish, Nabataean, and Hellenized Syro-Phoenician populations. See Frezouls, 1952, pp. 46-100; idem, 1961, pp. 54-68; idem, 1989, pp. 385-406. Cf. also Fuks, pp. 142-146; Tsafrir, pp. 115-121.

[3] The theatre at Sakkaia-Shakka, in Hauran, for example, has not yet been located, but an inscription found at the site confirms its existence; see Butler, 1915, p. 360 (Wadd. 2136). The location of the theatre at Damascus was determined on the basis of a survey of the city's streets, but the theatre itself has not yet been uncovered; see Sauvaget, pp. 314-358, espec. pp. 350-355.

Historiographic evidence tells us of the existence of an odeion at Caesarea: Malalas reports that after the Great Rebellion a "large odeion" was built upon the site of the Caesarea synagogue; see Malalas, p. 261; cf. also Levine, 1975a, pp. 25-26.

The theatre at Suweda-Dionysias, which some surveyors have mentioned though we have no graphical description nor photographs, seems to have been completely covered by new building; see Butler, 1915, p. 355 (see also the bibliography there of the surveyors who preceded Butler). Brünnow and v. Domaszewski, p. 96; Frezouls, 1989, p. 393. By the same token it is plausible that

The Herodian Theatres

The earliest theatres in Ancient Palestine were erected at the initiative of Herod and were funded by him. Josephus mentions three theatres built by Herod: at Caesarea, Jerusalem, and Jericho.[4] The theatre at Caesarea (see figs. 69-71) formed part of a grand urban complex. For Herod, Caesarea was the epitome of all his building activities in Judaea. With its many statues, temples, and entertainment facilities for spiritual and physical culture, Caesarea was to be the showcase of the kingdom of Judaea as Hellenistic in character and spirit.[5] Thus, the theatre, amphitheatre, and circus Herod built at Caesarea were an integral part of an architectural setting intended to bestow upon the city an unmistakably Hellenistic appearance.

The theatre in Jerusalem has as yet not been located.[6] Unlike at Caesarea, the population which might have made use of it is hard to pinpoint, a factor which may explain its "disappearance" over the years—one no longer hears of it after Herod's death. The theatre may simply have been abandoned or even, at some later stage, dismantled since no one took any further interest in it.

Herod's theatre at Jericho (see figs. 129-130), built near the king's winter palace complex, apparently served only the court circles. Integrated with the hippodrome, its special design indicates that the seating arrangement may also have served the chariot-race spectators, which in turn could mean that it may not have functioned as an actual theatre at all.[7]

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additional theatres may still be discovered in cities like Acco, Susita, Ashkelon, and Gaza; see Glucker, p. 19.

[4] See Josephus, *Antiquities* 15, 268 (Jerusalem), *Wars* 1, 415, (Caesarea), *Antiquities* 17, 161 (Jericho).

[5] The ceremonies at the founding of the city of Caesarea were accompanied by games and sports-competitions in the best Hellenistic tradition. Josephus stresses the large prizes which were awarded the competitors in order to attract them to the new city and thus put Caesarea on an equal footing with the other cities in the eastern Mediterranean Basin; see *Antiquities*, 16. 5. 1; *Wars*, 1. 21. 8. See further Schalit, pp. 332-340; Frova, 1966, pp. 57-195; Levine, 1975b (ch. 5, "Theatres," 23-26); Ringel, ("théâtre": pp. 45-51; "odéon": p. 51; "amphithéâtre": pp. 51-53; "hippodrome": pp. 53-55); Izenour, 1977, pp. 17-19.

[6] The accidental find of two "theatre tickets", whose identification as such is doubtful, is insufficient evidence for the theatre's existence. It seems that most of the tokens identified by Bieber as theatre tickets were in fact used as game tokens; see Bieber, p. 247, figs. 811-816; Avigad, pp. 193-194, illus. 239; Avi-Yonah, 1967, pp. 5, 8-9; Riad, pp. 157-166, pls. I-IV; Alfoldi, 1975, pp. 13-20; idem, 1971, pp. 1-9, pls. 10-8.

[7] Netzer, pp. 104-107.

The dating of the theatre at Sepphoris is still uncertain (see figs. 10-14). Some claim that it, too, was built by Herod, but it could also have been built by his son, Herod Antipas,[8] who made Sepphoris the capital of his kingdom. It is possible that Herod Antipas may have wanted to emulate his father by giving Sepphoris a Hellenistic cast. Though we do not know exactly how this theatre was used, we may assume that it, too, served the members of the court.

The theatres Herod built clearly belong to a larger group of structures erected with an obvious political intent, i.e., to have Judaea share in the spirit of the times and turn the kingdom into an equal among equals in the new world order which had become a fact after Rome had extended its rule over the entire Eastern Mediterranean Basin. This becomes more evident when one examines the surviving list of the building activities Herod initiated and sponsored, especially outside the borders of his own kingdom. He erected gymnasia, theatres, temples and marketplaces, and refurbished fortifications and plazas. A generous contribution of his even extricated the Olympic games, the symbol of the Hellenic spirit, from financial straits.[9]

And yet there is no ground to assume that Herod was a true philhellene. The theatres which he built were not intended to expose a new audience, viz. the residents of Judaea, to the beauties of Greek tragedy, nor even to satisfy his own artistic taste. The theatre was an alien implant in the Judaea of the end of the first century BCE. Its content and language were foreign to the vast majority of the population, not only to the Jewish segment. There is no evidence of the existence of theatres in the cities of the Decapolis and in the Hellenized cities along the coast, such as Ashkelon and Gaza, between the first century BCE and the end of the first century CE . This does not mean that these cities were unable to bear the expense of erecting theatres but rather that there was no interest in them and thus, simply, no need for them during this period.

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[8] Waterman, pp. 6-12, figs. 3-5; Strange, pp. 51-52. This exploratory excavation did not solve the problem of the theatre's founding, but corroborated that it was still in use in the 4th-5th centuries CE.

[9] Josephus, *Wars*, 1, 21. 12.

The Nabataean Area

At present we know of five theatres built in the Nabataean kingdom during the latter part of the first century BCE and the first century CE: two in Petra, one in Wadi Sabra, one at Elusa, and a fifth at Sahr, in Trachonitis (see fig. 1).

The large theatre at Petra (figs. 135-142), the only one of the Nabataean theatres to have been thoroughly studied and fully published, was built or, rather, hewn out for the most part of the very heart of the central necropolis,[10] at the time of Aretas IV (9 BCE - 40CE).[11] The theatre at Elusa, as yet not completely investigated, can also be dated to this period (figs. 131-134). It lies in the southeastern lowlands of the city, not far from the necropolis.[12]

In the Nabataean sanctuary at Sahr (see fig. 2), there is a small theatre near the temple,[13] which also may have fulfilled a purely ritual function. In addition, there is a courtyard in front of the temple which is designed as a theatrical architectural space with a stepped auditorium enclosing the courtyard on three sides in a U-shape. An epigraphic find proves that the Nabataeans themselves called such theatre-like courtyards *teiatra.*[14] It is an apt architectural solution also found in other Nabataean sanctuaries such as Sur, Seeia, and Khirbet et-Tannur.[15]

Actually, we know very little about the use the Nabataeans made of the theatres they built, and we are left with many questions which have as yet no clear answer. For example, did the Nabataean kings, like Herod, erect theaters so as to demonstrate that they wished to be part of the Hellenistic-Roman world, i.e., what was the degree of the Nabataeans' Hellenization vis-à-vis their Jewish and Syro-Phoenician neighbours in the cities of the Decapolis? Or did these theatres indeed serve only ritual pur-

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[10] Two theatres were found at Petra. The small theatre near the entrance of the city itself was surveyed by Wiegand and Bachmann, parallel to the survey of the large theatre at Wadi Mousa. The latter has largely remained intact because it had been hewn out of the rock, whereas the small theatre was completely destroyed and we have no information on it apart from Bachmann's testimony.

[11] See Hammond,1965.

[12] Negev, 1981, pp. 73-76, phot. 74; the inscription is clear evidence that the theatre at Elusa was still in use at the end of the 5th century.

[13] Butler, 1919, pp. 441-446.

[14] Littman, p. 77.

[15] On the sanctuary at Sur, see Butler, 1919, pp. 428-441; about Seeia, see Butler, 1916, pp. 374-399; Glueck, pp. 621-630, plans A-H.

poses? What is the connection between them and what the Nabataeans also called *teiatra*, that is, rectangular courtyards around which in a U-shape a few rows of seats were arranged? Prevailing scholarly opinion has it that the Nabataean theatres primarily had to do with necrolatry, that is, they served the crowds of people who gathered there in ritual worship of their dead. However, reservations arise when we find that of not a single one of the five Nabataean theatres can we state with certainty that it was built in a cemetery area and, hence, formed part of a sanctuary devoted to necrolatry. Answers to such questions and many others can hardly come from archaeological-architectural findings only, yet the amount of information we have from historical-literary sources on the culture of the Nabataeans in general and their forms of ritual and entertainment in particular is so minute that only further research and new discoveries will be able to help us out.[16]

The Hellenized Cities

Early stage. The first theatres in the Hellenized cities of Roman Palestine were built in the latter part of the first and the beginning of the second centuries CE, i.e., there is a gap of almost one hundred years between the theatres built by Herod and the first theatres erected in the Hellenized cities. The south theatre at Gerasa was the first theatre to be built during this period (see figs. 94-103). As evidenced by an inscription, it was dedicated between 90-92 CE.[17] The theatre is located in the southern part of the city, taking advantage of the northwestern slope of the hill with the huge worship site of the sanctuary of Zeus, of which it forms part. This location may be evidence of Nabataean traditions, though in Hellenistic and even in ancient Roman building traditions one also finds theatres incorporated in sanctuaries.[18] The theatre at

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[16] On the Nabataeans, see Hammond, 1973; Negev, 1977, 520-686; Patrick, pp. 19-49; Lindner, 1980; McKenzie.

[17] Kraeling, 1938, espec. C.S. Fisher's article on the theatre, pp. 19-20. In the excavations conducted during the 1960s and 1970s, a few inscriptions were discovered that made it possible to date the theatre to 90-92 CE; see Kirkbride, pp. 123-127; *Newsletter* 4 (October 1974); Pouilloux, 1977, pp. 246-254; idem, 1979, pp. 276-278. For an updated, lavishly illustrated summary and an isometric reconstruction of the *scaenae frons*, see Browning, pp. 125-131, figs. 62-66.

[18] Theatres were incorporated in most of the sanctuaries in the Greek and Hellenistic world, e.g., the theatre of Dionysos on the southeast slope of the Acropolis, the theatre at the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, and the theatre at

Pella (figs. 61-66) has also been dated to the latter part of the first or the beginning of the second century CE.[19]

The theatre at Bosra can be dated to the first decade of the second century CE (see figs. 38-48).[20] Both the theatre and the nearby circus were erected when Bosra from a flourishing Nabataean trading station became the capital of Provincia Arabia. The initiative, it seems, came from the provincial government, and the two installations were meant to serve first and foremost the 3rd Cyrenaica Legion for which Bosra formed their base-camp.[21]

It is not known, on the other hand, who initiated the building of the south theatre at Gerasa. An inscription the excavators of Gerasa discovered tells us that one *cuneus* in the theatre was contributed by a decurion who had been mustered out of the army and had settled there, but this, of course, is insufficient evidence for concluding that as at Bosra the initiative for erecting the theatre at Gerasa also came from Roman soldiers who had settled in the city, though it is not entirely implausible.[22]

Middle stage. The end of the first century CE and the beginning of the second mark the start of a period of prosperity for the Trans-Jordan cities. The establishment of Provincia Arabia, the paving of the *Via Traiana Nova* and its various feeder roads, and finally, the peace concluded with the Parthians at the end of Trajan's military campaigns, all of these created favourable conditions for the flourishing and prosperity of the cities of Provincia Arabia and Roman Palestine.[23]

The large and small theatres at Philadelphia, the northern theatre at Gerasa, the theatre at Kanawat, and apparently also the theatre recently unearthed at Shechem (Neapolis), were all erected in the days of the Antonine emperors, in particular Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius.

When we look for criteria which differentiate between the thea-

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Pergamon; see Travlos, 1971, pp. 537-552, figs. 676-690; Coste-Messeliere and Picars, 1943, pp. 317, 332, figs. 25, 198-199; Bohn, 1902, tables I, IV, XLV. On theatres incorporated in sanctuaries in Roman architecture, see Frezouls, 1982, pp. 343-441.

[19] Smith and Day, espec. ch. 3, "The Odeum", pp. 20-33.

[20] Frezouls, 1952, pp. 69-79; Finsen; Rey-Coquais, p. 66.

[21] Jones, 1937, p. 293; Bowersock, 1971, pp. 219-242, pls. XIV-XV; idem, 1982, pp. 76-89.

[22] Kraeling, 1938, p. 399, inscr. 52; Frezouls, 1961, pp. 58, notes 1-2; Jones, 1928, pp. 152f.; according to Jones the retired decurio did not pay the entire cost of the *cuneus*, but merely contributed towards it.

[23] See above, note 21.

tres built in the days of Herod and those erected in the Hellenized cities from the time of the Antonine emperors we find two central factors: initiative and audience.

The initiative, e.g., for the south theatre at Gerasa and that at Bosra, was possibly not a local, municipal one. Similarly, the theatre at Legio (figs. 35-37), which was the base-camp of the 6th Legion, may have been built, like that at Bosra, at imperial, not local, initiative.[24] The theatre at Philippopolis (figs. 3-9), the mausoleum-city of Emperor Philip the Arab (244-249), was undoubtedly built at the initiative of Philip himself. (This was the last theatre to be built in the Roman East.)[25] All of the other theatres were erected through local, i.e., city initiative.

The north theatre at Gerasa (figs. 85-93) was erected in the days of Emperor Marcus Aurelius, about seventy years after the southern theatre.[26] While it differs from its predecessor in size and in the way it was constructed, the major difference between the two theatres is their location. Whereas the south theatre was built on the northeastern slope of the hill of the Zeus sanctuary, to the south of the city, and not connected to the city itself, the north theatre is both architecturally and spatially well integrated into the network of Gerasa's streets.

The impressive large theatre at Philadelphia, the southern most

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[24] The city of Legio was established as a base-camp city for the 6th Legion in the first quarter of the 2nd century CE; see Avi-Yonah, 1966, pp. 141-142. Schumacher, who was the first to recognize its existence, surveyed the theatre and even determined its general dimensions: 71 m. long on its east-west axis, it was 52 m. on its north-south axis. It faced east. Schumacher also located many architectural items. The theatre was last surveyed by Z. Ilan, who succeeded in locating a few stone seats. When we surveyed the theatre in the summer of 1985, except for the clear outline of the cavea, other details were difficult to make out. On aerial photos the theatre's outline is clearly visible. Its oval shape may indicate an installation combining a theatre and amphitheatre in one building, a not uncommon feature in Roman cities of the 2nd-3rd centuries CE. The best known example of such a building is found at Verulamium, today's St. Albans, in England. See Schumacher, 1908, vol. 1 (text), pp. 173-176, figs. 258-261 ("Das Theater"); vol. 2 (illustrations), pl. 1; Ilan, pp. 24-25; Kenyon, 1975, pp. 5-9; idem, 1935, pp. 213-261.

[25] Coupel and Frezouls; Butler, 1903, pp. 376-396; Brünnow and v. Domaszewski, vol. 3, pp. 145-179.

Recently a first report summarizing twelve seasons of excavations at Antipatris was published in which the site's excavators date the small theatre uncovered there to the latter part of the 3rd century or even the beginning of the 4th century: see Kochavi, pp. 103-109, illus. 89-94.

[26] Schumacher, 1902, pp. 145-150; Fisher, pp. 22-23. The north theatre was recently excavated partially, see Zayadine, 1986, pp. 205-229.

city of the Decapolis (figs. 118-124), is also well integrated into the city's landscape.[27] Its *cavea* makes partial use of the slope of the hill which closes off the centre of the city on the south, and faces the forum and the city's main colonnaded thoroughfare (the *decumanus maximus*). Together these structures create a well-planned and impressive city centre. Nearby, to the theatre's east, stands the "odeion", in effect a small-scale theatre (figs. 125-128), built only slightly later than the larger theatre. This combination of a large and a small theatre together forming a single unit is unique in the entire eastern Mediterranean Basin and even in the western regions of the Roman Empire has very few parallels.[28]

The theatre at Neapolis (Shechem), unearthed in recent years, appears to have been built in the first half of the second century CE (see figs. 109-113).

According to epigraphic evidence, the small theatre at Kanawat (figs. 15-19) also dates from the days of the Antonine emperors.[29] It was found in a gorge, most of it hewn out of the lower slope of the hill. Its relative remove from the city's centre and its verdant surroundings point to the fact that like the theatres at Hammat-Gader or Birketein, it may have been intended for ritual celebrations and festivals.

Final stage. The remaining theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia, i.e., the majority, were all built in the latter part of the second and the first half of the third century CE, mainly during the reigns of the Severan emperors. To this group belong the theatres at Beth-Shean, Sebaste, Dor, Hammat-Gader, and apparently also the theatre at Shumi and on the eastern side of the Jordan, the theatres at Gadara, Pella, Abila, and the theatre at Birketein near Gerasa.

The theatre at Beth Shean (Scythopolis), excavated in the early 1960s, was apparently erected at the beginning of the third century CE. Not far from it, an amphitheatre was recently uncovered, apparently belonging to the same period (see figs. 49-58).[30]

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27 El-Fakharani, pp. 377-403; Hanson, pp. 59-77, figs. 16, 27, 36; Frezouls, 1961, p. 225.

28 Segal, pp. 3-18; Bieber, p. 201, figs. 678-679, notes 20-21; Modona, 1961, pp. 88-96, fig. 48.

29 See Magen, pp. 269-277. On the theatre at Kanawat, see Butler, 1915, pp. 346-351. On the inscription, see Waddington, p. 537 (inscr. 2341).

30 Applebaum, pp. 77-105; Ovadiah and de Silva, pp. 85-97. For a comprehensive summary of the historical and epigraphical sources, see Fuks, pp. 123-141; Plommer, pp. 132-140; Izenour, pp. 39-40.

The theatre at Sebaste, excavated in the 1930s, is equally dated to the Severi (see figs. 104-108).[31]

The theatre at Birketein, also dated to the beginning of the third century CE, was located in the open sanctuary of Gerasa, 1,200 m. north of the city (see figs. 79-83).[32] The theatre is incorporated in a sanctuary which has a large pool at its centre while the remnants of altars, a decorative gate, and porticos are found nearby. Epigraphic and literary evidence confirm that the open sanctuary of Gerasa was renowned for the Maiumas festivities which were held there.[33]

About the excavations begun at Beth-Shean in 1980, see Fuks, pp. 139-141; Mazor, 1988a, pp. 24-26; idem, 1988b, pp. 7-45. When excavations were renewed at Beth-Shean, a theatre of small dimensions was uncovered, most of which, however, had been destroyed by buildings later erected near it, see Mazor, 1988a, the "odeion", pp. 8-9, fig. 4; idem, 1988b, pp. 18-19.

[31] See Crowfoot et al., pp. 57-61; Zayadine, 1967/68, pp. 77-79.

[32] See Schumacher, 1902, pp. 165-171, figs. 39-42; McCown, pp. 39-42, 159-167, pls. XXXIII-XXXV.

[33] Welles, pp. 470-471; Thomsen, pp. 51-52.

The little we know of the Maiumas Festival comes from a small number of inscriptions and from Christian sources of the 5th and 6th centuries CE. Our main source is Malalas of Antioch (491-578), who relates that it is a Syrian festival celebrated every three years with a theatre-night event. While there are differences as to the duration of the festival—some think that it lasted thirty days, others only five or seven—all sources agree that the festivities were of an obvious licentious, orgiastic nature, akin to the pagan mysteries in honour of Bacchus and Aphrodite, and that it was connected with both the theatre and with water. The centre of the Maiumas festivities seems to have been at Antioch. Malalas and Libanius picture the festival's festive atmosphere, especially at night, when there would be torchlights and fireworks. The festival's popularity was great among all strata of the population and Christian sources confirm the Church's struggle in trying to suppress it. Forbidden by Emperor Constantius, it was allowed again a short time later by Julian while Theodosius forbade it again. In the days of Arcadius and Honorius it is in turn forbidden and permitted. The Theodosian Code (XVI, 6, I) contains special legislation on the festival, i.e., it was permitted on condition that it would be held in a "modest and respectable manner", a condition apparently not met because it was soon again forbidden (XVI, 6, 2). In the Justinian Code it is again forbidden (XI, 46). The latest evidence, showing that Maiumas festivities' were held throughout the Byzantine Empire, comes from the year 770 in the reign of Leo IV, when there is also mention of the Maiumas festivities taking place in Constantinople itself. Possibly the "Festival of the Roses" held in Gaza became a local version of the Maiumas festivities, though they remained two different things. Also, while within the framework of the Maiumas festivities events like "water theatre" were held, we also know of such events without any connection to the Maiumas festivities (see below, note 36). On the Maiumas festivities and the sources dealing with it, see "Maiumas" in *Paulys Real Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, vol. 14, Stuttgart 1930, cols. 610-612. Cf. also Jones, 1973, pp. 977-978, 1021; Avi-Yonah, 1953, p. 142; Dan, p. 198 (n. 767), p. 203 (n. 16). On the Maiumas Festival in the Midrashim and Talmudim, see Levy, pp. 128-129; Jastrow, p. 771; Krupnik, vol. 2, p. 33.

Apparently, the small theatre near the baths complex at Hammat-Gader (see figs. 20-22) was integrated into an open sanctuary situated near the large city of Gadara. Here, too, we find an abundance of water and green, and many therapeutic springs. The theatre is dated to the first half of the third century CE.[34]

The theatre at Dor, though only partially excavated, can be dated to the third century CE (figs. 32-33).[35]

The theatre at Shumi (figs. 72-78) was part of an open sanctuary and fulfilled for Caesarea possibly the same function as the Hammat-Gader theatre for Gadara.[36]

Summary

What inspired the cities throughout Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia in the course of the second and third centuries CE to build dozens of theatres which, obviously, were expensive entertainment facilities and must undoubtedly have put a strain on their economies? As already mentioned, beginning at the end of the first century CE and especially during the second century the cities of the area enjoyed a period of obvious growth and prosperity. Wishing to demonstrate their newly acquired affluence and their civic pride but knowing that political and military avenues were barred to them, the citizens turned their energies and funds to construction activities which could satisfy this desire for ostentation, viz., colonnaded streets, triumphal arches, nymphaea, tetrapyla, and, of course, theatres.

When most of these theatres were built classical plays were already disappearing from the stage throughout the Roman world and being replaced by lighter and often less select forms of entertainment. In the eastern part of the Roman Empire, particularly in our area, classic tragedy and comedy had never earned a permanent place—the only theatre form the residents of Beth-Shean or Shechem apparently ever knew was mime.[37]

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[34] Avi-Yonah, 1966, p. 174; Schumacher, 1888, pp. 154-155, figs. 54-58; Sukenik, fig. 7; see also s.v. "Hammat Gader," EAEHL, vol. 2, pp. 469-473.

[35] Leibowitz, pp. 38-39, which includes a partial plan of the theatre there, presented in its totality for the first time, figs. 32, 33.

[36] Historiographic and literary evidence support this claim; see Conder and Kitchener, 1881-83, pp. 66-67; Avi-Yonah, 1976, p. 73. For a preliminary report on the Shumi Theatre excavations, see Shenhav, 1990a.

[37] In the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, classical plays were still being presented

Archaeological data confirm that in the course of the third and fourth centuries CE the theatres of Shechem, Caesarea, and perhaps also Beth-Shean were adapted so as to make the production of "water-theatre" possible. Water pipes were installed and the orchestra was enclosed by a low, solid wall and could be filled with water in a few hours.[38] Water-based entertainment productions (*tetimimi*) were reputed to be of a somewhat dubious character, to say the least, but they became highly popular throughout the entire Roman Empire during the period. Early Christian sources, especially of the fourth till sixth centuries, report that the Church came out vehemently against this form of entertainment but encountered difficulty in uprooting it since by then city residents in Roman Palestine, Southern Syria, and Provincia Arabia had grown

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in the easter Roman Empire (see Bieber, p. 250), but during the course of the 3rd and 4th centuries tragedy and comedy gave way to lighter, more popular forms of entertainment: mime and pantomime became very popular throughout the Empire. Mime's primary aim was to show the amusing and the confusing side of everyday life. To this end, crude vulgarities, derisive hand gestures, and *double entendres* were employed. Parody also became an integral part of mime. Qualities of character and behavioural patterns were underscored by improvised spontaneous dialogue (for the most part there was no script). Negative human qualities, weakness of character, and human foibles were held up to ridicule. Fun was poked at all classes, at the representatives of all sections of the community, and at the professions. Mime was notable for its licentiousness, its crude and daring humour. The actors and actresses who appeared in it did not wear masks. Mime actors even allowed themselves to voice criticism of the emperors and the members of the ruling class, by hinting at what was happening in the imperial family (for example, they alluded to the infidelities of Faustina, the wife of Marcus Aurelius). If mime was a sort of substitute for classical comedy, pantomime was destined to be tragedy's replacement. There were two distinct types of pantomime: tragic and light, the latter a kind of burlesque or parody. In "tragic" pantomime, the actor/dancer imitated the events of the drama by means of hand movements and dance, against a background of choral song portraying the different characters in their order of appearance in the original drama. In the lighter form of pantomime, the actors concentrated on parodies of the gods and the various mythological figures. See Bieber, pp. 237-239 (pantomime), 248-250 (mime).

[38] Excavation reports explicitly note that at a later stage in their existence the *orchestra* was adapted to serve as a pool (Caesarea, note 5; Beth-Shean, note 30; Samaria, note 31). Water theatre became very popular throughout the Roman Empire, especially in the 3rd-4th centuries; see Traversari. Archaeological evidence of the existence of installations for channelling water to the *orchestra* has been found in a number of famous theatres such as the theatre at Daphne, the open ritual worship area of Antioch; see Silber, pp. 59-73. On the theatre of Dionysos in Athens, see Fiechter, p. 82. On the theatre at Corinth, see Stillwell, pp. 13, 174, 140. Representatives of water spectacles can also be found on mosaics, such as at Antioch, see Levi, pl. 79. See also the mosaics at Piazza Armerina in Sicily: Gentili, 1954, pp. 47-48; idem, 1964, pl. 14; Pace, pp. 77-91, pls. 14-16. Also see above, note 33.

too fond of it. In both Talmudic and Christian sources a relatively large amount of space is devoted to the theatre, which for them meant only mime, which had gained immense popularity. Apart from mime and water-theatre presentations, sporting events such as boxing, wrestling, and calisthenics may also have been held in the theatres.[39]

The theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia during the first centuries CE were in effect facilities for public mass entertainment which provided amusement of rather the plainest kind. They catered to a culturally Hellenized, Oriental audience which was satisfied with mime presentations and may never even have watched a classical tragedy or comedy.

Thus, while the Herodian theatres were a foreign imposition upon the landscape of Roman Palestine and never truly reflected the cultural needs of the majority of the population, and the

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[39] Theatres and other institutions of entertainment are frequently mentioned both in Talmudic literature (mainly in the Jerusalem Talmud) and in Christian sources. In Jewish literature, theatre is considered primarily as a form of idolatry in which Jews are not to participate; only when community demands so required was one allowed to attend theatrical performances. The theatre is usually mentioned together with "circuses", i.e., with the hippodrome and amphitheatre. A hostile approach to the theatre, and especially to mime, also characterizes the Christian sources. It is clear that the Church reluctantly made its peace with the highly popular chariot races in the circus, but it fought vehemently against the theatre. Its opposition even spawned legislation forbidding the performances of mimes. These bans prove how alive and widespread mimes still were in the Christian world of the 5th and 6th centuries CE, especially in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia. The "water theatre", known for its licentiousness, continued to be shown throughout the Byzantine period, in spite of the strong opposition of the Church. Caesarea, Ashkelon, and Gaza are cities often mentioned in both Jewish and Christian sources in connection with theatre, athletic competitions and other mass entertainment during the Roman period and until the latter days of the Byzantine era; see Cotytas; Petit; Pack; Downey, 1937, pp. 141-146; Norman (for Libanius' attitude to the theatre, see p. 148). For the Talmudic sources on the theatre and other entertainment installations, see Jastrow, vol. 2, p. 1663, where all the references to theatre, circus and amphitheatre mentioned in the Midrash and Jerusalem Talmud are brought together and cited in brief. A more general discussion of the attitude of the Jewish Sages in Ancient Palestine at the time of the Mishna and the Talmud to the theatre and the other entertainment installations can be found in the comprehensive volume of Krauss, vol. 3, pp. 117-121 (notes 290-319). On the nature of the Roman and Hellenistic theatre of the 3rd and 4th centuries CE in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, see Bieber, pp. 250-253. For a comprehensive, in-depth summary of the Christian and Rabbinic sources dealing with the theatre in Ancient Palestine at the end of the Byzantine period, see Dan, esp. pp. 203-209, and Levine. From the 4th to the 6th centuries the only presentation mentioned in the great number of Christian sources cited in connection with the theatres in Ancient Palestine is the mime.

Nabataean theatres primarily seem to have served a ritual purpose, it was the lively, popular mime presentation which responded to the cultural needs of the majority of the region's city-dwellers and almost exclusively dominated the theatrical stages till the end of the Byzantine period.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Though sharing a single clearly defined structure, a geographically limited area, and a given chronological framework, the thirty theatres found in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia do not constitute a uniform group. While in the Corpus a detailed description is given of each separate site, the following analysis is an attempt at a clear functional categorization of all theatres known to us in the region. It aims to define the location of each of them within the city's boundaries, or, for some of them, within sanctuaries outside the cities, and to evaluate their contribution to the design of the urban landscape, in particular the reciprocal relationship, if any, between the theatre and other public buildings. More specifically, our analysis will try to clarify the following aspects: category, location, plan, dimensions, construction methods and materials, and decoration.

Categories

The theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia can be divided into two primary categories:

A. Urban theatres

B. Ritual theatres

Urban theatres are theatres that were erected within cities and were intended to serve, first and foremost, the city's own population whereas ritual theatres were built in sanctuaries outside the cities and served the diversified population that frequented the sanctuary. However, among the urban theatres some have a clear connection with an urban sanctuary while some theatres in sanctuaries outside the cities are closely connected with the nearby city. This makes a further division necessary of the "ritual" theatres into two sub-groups:

B1 – Urban ritual theatres

B2 – Extra-urban ritual theatres

Thus we arrive at the following categorization:

A *Urban Theatres*

1. Philippopolis
2. Sepphoris
3. Kanawat
4. Gadara (north theatre)
5. Gadara (west theatre)
6. Abila
7. Dor
8. Legio
9. Bosra
10. Beth-Shean (large theatre)
11. Beth-Shean (small theatre)
12. Pella
13. Caesarea
14. Gerasa
15. Sebaste
16. Neapolis (Shechem)
17. Antipatris
18. Philadelphia (large theatre)
19. Philadelphia (small theatre)

B1 *Urban Ritual Theatres*

1. Hammat-Gader
2. Gerasa (at the Zeus sanctuary)
3. Elusa
4. Petra (large theatre)
5. Petra (small theatre)

B2 *Extra-urban Ritual Theatres*

1. Sahr (Nabataean sanctuary)
2. Shumi (sanctuary near Caesarea)
3. Birketein (sanctuary near Gerasa)
4. Wadi Sabra (sanctuary in the vicinity of Petra)

Even this division is problematic and raises a number of questions.[1] The theatre at Elusa, e.g., is clearly urban, if we go by its location (see fig. 131).[2] The same is true of the theatres in Petra. While built at the edge of the city, near the necropolis, the location of the larger theatre was primarily dictated by the area's topography: A detailed examination of the surroundings indicates that it was simply hewn out in the most accessible place, in the ab-

[1] On the Nabataean theatres, see also above, Introduction, pp. 6-7, note 16.

[2] Although the Elusa theatre is located at the edge of the city, not far from the necropolis, the theatre's auditorium opens towards the city and not towards the necropolis. See below, Corpus, pp. 89-91.

[3] Its location within the necropolis area seems, at first glance, sufficient to determine that Petra's large theatre served the necrolatry rituals. However, there are actually very few graves near the theatre, whereas in the cliffs and the slopes north of the theatre homes were found, part of them constructed and part of them hewn out, pointing possibly to a residential area. These homes have not yet been investigated. (I am grateful to Dr. J. McKenzie for this important piece of information.) Obviously, topographical considerations also played a part—the theatre was hewn out in a spot which was particularly suited for this purpose (see figs.

sence of a suitable site in the centre of Petra.[3] The small theatre, situated on the northern bank of Wadi Mousa, is closer to the centre of Petra. Here, a colonnaded street apparently connected the theatre with the city's centre (see fig. 135).[4]

The south theatre at Gerasa, located in the area of the Zeus sanctuary, is clearly an urban ritual theatre. In spite of the fact that it was located within the city's walls, with its courts, theatre, and temple, the sanctuary obviously comprises a single, clearly delineated entity (see figs. 94-95).[5]

The small theatre at Hammat-Gader was built with a clear connection to the site at the centre of which were the hot springs. There is sufficient historiographic and epigraphic evidence to connect the theatre to the events and rituals that were held there in conjunction with the therapeutic-ritual activities taking place in the bath complex (see figs. 21-22).[6]

Two of the four extra-urban theatres are Nabataean: one at Sahr and the other at Wadi Sabra. Undoubtedly they are part of sanctuaries and were built in connection with the nearby temples (see figs. 2, 144).[7] The theatre of Wadi Sabra may also have served for water games, as nearby water facilities suggest. About the actual existence of water games in the Nabataean sphere, or about a linkage between Nabataean worship and water games, we have no documentary information whatsoever.[8]

The sanctuary at Shumi seems to have served as the sanctuary of

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139-140). Through the riverbed at the foot of the theatre runs a paved road, the continuation of the colonnaded street that bisects Petra, which passes in front of the nymphaeon, the small theatre, and then reaches the large theatre. Continuing a little further eastward, it ends at the gate that apparently marked the entrance to Petra. See also below, Corpus, pp. 91-92.

[4] The small theatre at Petra has not yet been excavated and all our information is based upon the survey done at the site by the German excavators in 1917. Its location at the eastern edge of the city, its proximity to the nymphaeon and the paved road (see previous note), all confirm that we are dealing with an "urban theatre". Again, we have no idea what kind of events it served. If the theory that the theatre was connected to a water supply system turns out to be correct, we may then assume that, in whatever form, water games also had their enthusiasts among the Nabataeans. (Again, I am indebted to Dr. J. McKenzie for her information about the water supply system near the small theatre). We may recall that almost certainly a sophisticated water supply system led to the orchestra of the small theatre at Wadi Sabra, p. 94.

[5] See also below, Corpus, pp. 75-77.

[6] See also below, pp. 45-46.

[7] See also above, pp. 6-7.

[8] See also below, pp. 93-95.

Caesarea,[9] and one may safely assume that the Maiumas festivities, which engendered such enthusiasm among the population of Roman and Byzantine Palestine, were usually held here (see figs. 72-78).[10]

Likewise, the theatre at Birketein was built with a clear tie to Gerasa and functioned as its extra-urban sanctuary, near a reservoir. Here, too, epigraphic evidence confirms that it was customary to hold the Maiumas festivities there (see figs. 79-83).[11]

Of the total of nine theatres we have defined as ritual theatres (urban and extra-urban) five are found in the Nabataean sphere. The remaining twenty or so theatres thus are urban theatres, intended first and foremost to serve the residents of the cities in which they were built.

Location

Though we find a few theatres located at the edge of cities away from areas of dense construction, e.g., Dor, Bosra, or Neapolis, on the whole theatres were built in spots where it was possible to exploit natural slopes and their location was thus primarily dictated by the prevailing topography, i.e., the theatre was erected where all or part of the cavea could be based on a natural incline. This also explains why often theatres do not show any clear coordination with the city's street network. In fact, of only four of the thirty theatres under review is it obvious that their location, orientation, and the way in which they were incorporated into the city's landscape had been given careful consideration before building was begun.

The north theatre at Gerasa offers the best example of a theatre's successful integration into the city's network of streets (see figs. 85-93).[12] Its orientation and the way in which the plaza behind the stage building integrated with the northern *decumanus* and the municipal plaza to the north of it confirm that much thought and careful planning were invested in the site.

The location of the theatre at Antipatris also shows that its builders carefully considered its location: the theatre was erected

[9] See also below, pp. 69-70.
[10] On the Maiumas festivities, see Introduction, above, p. 11, note 33.
[11] See also below, p. 71.
[12] See below, pp. 72-74.

along the southern part of the *cardo*, the leading thoroughfare of Antipatris, with the stage building parallel to the course of the street (see figs. 114-117).[13]

With the agora below them, the two theatres at Philadelphia are poised to form an impressive urban complex. Evidently both theatres and the agora were erected as part of a single urban spatial plan (see figs. 118-119).[14]

At the same time, since most of them were built on hillsides, theatres inevitably provided obvious urban foci. Their size and characteristic shape, and the abundance of architectural decoration, all combined to make them stand out prominently in the urban landscape, and builders were clearly aware of the impact a theatre structure would have on the city's overall appearance. Often colonnaded streets led to the theatres, even when these lay outside the city, e.g., in Bosra and apparently also in Caesarea (see figs. 39, 67). At Bosra, not only do we find a special colonnaded street which led to the theatre from the *decumanus maximus* but a decorative arch was added to mark the entrance to the "theatre street" (see fig. 39).[15]

In certain cities, e.g., Sepphoris, Sebaste, and Gadara, where theatres were placed on scenic heights, they stood out dramatically (see figs. 17, 23, 108).

While it is true of urban ritual theatres that they were erected near temples, urban theatres for the most part stand apart and have little connection by way of spatial planning to other public buildings in the city. Except for the few instances already mentioned (the north theatre at Gerasa, the theatre at Antipatris, and the two at Philadelphia), we know of no public buildings erected in the immediate vicinity of the theatres. In other cities, even where there is more than one entertainment structure, they are not brought together to form one clearly defined area. At Bosra, for example, while theatre and circus are located close to one another, the area between the two shows no spatial organization whatsoever (see figs. 39, 40). In the case of the two theatres at Gadara, in spite of the fact that they were built near one another, there was no attempt either to create any sense of a defined public spatial connection between them (see figs. 23, 25).

[13] See also below, pp. 81-82.
[14] On the large theatre, see below, pp. 82-85, on the small theatre, pp. 85-87.
[15] See below, pp. 53-55.

Plans

All thirty theatres in our region are "Roman" theatres, i.e., the *orchestra* does not form a complete circle but is semicircular and the *cavea* does not extend beyond this semicircle (see figs. 148-149).[16] In all other aspects these theatres differ from one another and no two can be said actually to be completely identical.

As noted above, virtually all the theatres in our region were built on the slopes of hills in order that at least part of the cavea could be based on a natural slope and thus save the time and effort the building of artificial substructures would have required.

Except for the small theatres, the cavea in most of the theatres is composed of two horizontal sections of seats, lower (*ima cavea*)

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[16] Vitruvius dwelt in great detail upon the manner in which the Greek (V.7.1) and Roman theatres (V.6.1) were designed and planned; his also is the division into "Roman" and "Greek". Principal differences have been summarized by Bieber. One of the important differences is the way in which the cavea was constructed (see below, "Construction Methods and Materials," pp. 29-32). Recent studies try to find explanations for the gap between Vitruvius's theoretical text and the reality in the field, and to answer the question to what extent Vitruvius's text, with its guidance and directives, served as a source of inspiration or a model for the theatre builders throughout the Roman world. Today, when more than four hundred Roman theatres have been unearthed and dozens of them have been published, no consensus exists among scholars about the way and the method Roman theatres were planned. At the same time, there is no difference of opinion about the fact that not a single theatre of those known to us today was planned and designed according to Vitruvius's model.

The division of the Roman theatres by region, into "eastern" and "western" theatres, has not proven itself and no longer has many supporters. On the other hand, a clear difference exists between Roman theatres built in areas where there was no previous theatre tradition and those built in areas where in the past Greek theatres had been erected. When one looks at the theatres in North Africa, for example, and the Roman theatres in Asia Minor, one finds that the former are indeed "Roman", whereas in part of the theatres erected during the Roman period in Asia Minor, the Greek Hellenistic influence is evident especially where the shape of the cavea and the connection between it and the scaena are concerned. That is, we find a local, unique tendency to build a Roman theatre whose contours remind one of the Greek, Hellenistic theatre.

The model in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia was a Roman one but, as in other areas throughout the Roman Empire, here too great liberties were taken. Local building traditions, special needs, considerations of topography—all made for great variety in everything pertaining to the configuration of the theatres, details of design, and architectural-engineering solutions employed.

On the main differences between the Greek and the Roman theatres, see Bieber, p. 189. See also Boëthius and Ward-Perkins, pp. 373-377, fig. 145. The studies of Small, Isler and Sear attempt to reconstruct the manner in which Vitruvius suggests planning the Roman theatre. About the Roman theatres in North Africa, see Romanelli, pls. 112-122; Caputo, 1959; idem, 1987. About the Roman theatres in Asia Minor, see de Bernardi Ferrero.

and upper (*summa cavea*), which are separated by a semicircular corridor called a *praecinctio* (see figs. 148-149). In the theatres of Philadelphia, Bosra, and the large theatre at Petra (and also at Beth-Shean and Neapolis), we find caveae which had three horizontal sections: ima, media, and summa cavea. In small theatres like Hammat-Gader, Sahr, or Wadi Sabra, we find only one horizontal section of seats.

The horizontal seat sections are divided by radial staircases (*scalaria*) into wedge-shaped segments (*cunei*). In the top part of the cavea, behind the uppermost row of seats, there is a circumferential corridor bounded by a smooth parapet-like wall (the *porticus*), sometimes, as in the case of the Bosra theatre, bearing columns (figs. 48, 148).

Entrance to the theatre from the cavea side was via radial barrel-vaulted passageways (*vomitoria*). Depending upon the size of the theatre, their number varied from two (as in Sahr) to eight (e.g., Beth-Shean).

In most of the theatres the exterior semicircular wall closing the theatre from the cavea side is in fact the outer of two concentric continuous walls arranged in a semicircle and creating a barrel-vaulted corridor, the *ambulacrum* (see fig. 90). Cut into these walls are the radial passageways (vomitoria) which allow entry from outside the theatre into the ambulacrum, and from there via the vomitoria to the praecinctio which separated the two horizontal sections of seats in the cavea. The overall impression the outside walls of most theatres in our region offer the viewer is one of a massive semicircular chunk of construction, except for a number of arched entrance ways seemingly impenetrable.

It seems that only the three theatres at Bosra, Beth-Shean, and Caesarea were encircled by rectangular solid piers which were linked by vaults and rose to a height of two or three storeys, like the theatre of Marcellus in Rome (see fig. 150).[17]

In most of the theatres the orchestra was semicircular; only in a few small theatres was it U-shaped, for example, the orchestra of the Nabataean ritual theatre at Sahr (see fig. 2).[18] The orchestra floors in most cases were paved with stone slabs. On rare occasions a marble slab paving has been found. Often a drainage system was built around the orchestra and under its paved floor. In

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[17] On the theatre of Marcellus in Rome, see Nash, vol. 2, pp. 418-422, fig. 1211.

[18] See below, pp. 38-39.

those theatres in which the orchestra was adaptable to serve as a pool for water games, it was encircled by a stone parapet and coated with water-proof plaster (see, e.g., Caesarea[19]).

Two passageways, arranged opposite one another and located between the walls bounding the cavea and the stage building, led into the orchestra from both sides. These two passageways (*aditus maximi*) permitted direct access to the orchestra from outside the theatre. They are almost always built as barrel-vaulted corridors. Since the orchestra level is generally lower than that of the surroundings, the aditus maximi are usually slightly inclined.

In most of the theatres uncovered in our region the stage building has been almost entirely destroyed and in only a few places have excavators been successful in reconstructing its original appearance. Theatres which never had a stage building at all, such as the Nabataean ritual theatre at Sahr (see fig. 2)[20] and the theatre at Hammat-Gader (see fig. 21),[21] functioned as ritual theatres *par excellence*, which may perhaps explain the absence of the stage building.[22]

Where a theatre's state of preservation made it possible to determine the components of the stage building, we usually find the following: the front wall of the stage (*proscaenium*), the stage (*pulpitum*), the stage building (*scaena*), and the stage building wings (*versurae*). The proscaenium generally rises to a height of about 1m. and separates the orchestra from the pulpitum itself. Built of stone, sometimes of marble, it is designed as a smooth wall or one with alternating rectangular and semicircular niches. Unlike in the Roman theatres of Asia Minor or North Africa, no proscaenia with reliefs have been found.[23]

In the theatres of Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia, as in all Roman theatres, the stage building and the cavea create a

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[19] See below, pp. 64-69.

[20] See below, pp. 38-39.

[21] See below, pp. 45-46.

[22] This does not necessarily mean that no worship rituals or other non-theatrical events were held in theatres with stage installations. But the absence of a stage arrangement reinforces the assumption that it served ritual and not theatrical activities. According to the excavators of the sanctuary theatre at Birketein near Gerasa, the scaena was kept low in order to allow an unobstructed view of the nearby pool at the foot of the theatre where usually water games were held as part of the Maiumas festivities (see above, p. 11, note 33).

[23] See, for example, the theatre at Hierapolis, Asia Minor, where the reliefs that decorated the proscaenium have survived intact; see de Bernardi Ferrero, vol. 1, "Hierapolis - Il Proscenio del Teatro", pp. 57-67, pl. XXI.

single architectural continuum, i.e., the sides of the cavea touch the walls of the versurae which turns the theatre structure into one closed architectural space (see figs. 148-149).[24]

The stage itself (pulpitum) is shaped as a long, narrow rectangle. Its two short walls are bounded by the versurae, which resemble rectangular towers and make movement possible between the stage building and the cavea. The pulpitum usually was made of wooden boards that were placed upon a series of arches built in the *hyposcaenium* space, i.e., in the expanse under the stage. In a few theatres, at a later stage in their existence, the hyposcaenium space was filled with earth and paved with stone slabs (e.g., at Sepphoris[25]).

The pulpitum could be reached via entrances located in the two versurae. Unlike the aditus maximi, these passages, called *itinera versurarum*, were meant for the actors only. Their shape and manner of design closely resembled those of the aditus maximi to which they were attached, running parallel to them (see fig. 148). The itinera versurarum provided easy passage from the stage building, with its rooms and halls, to the stage building wings, and from there to the pulpitum itself. Where the stage building was limited to one solid wall (see below), the space in the versurae served the players and the stagehands as dressing rooms, for scenery storage, etc.

In most of our region's theatres, the stage building (the scaena), its shape like a long, narrow rectangle, extends along the entire width of the theatre. It consists of two parallel walls, of which the wall facing the stage is the thicker one since the decoration of the stage building's front wall rests upon it (see below).

At times, the sides of the stage building were enlarged so that they could contain staircases (see Beth-Shean, for example[26]). In most theatres the versurae and the scaena form a single block which like an inverted U encloses the pulpitum on its three sides.

The stage building's front wall, the *scaenae frons*, varied in design. At times it was straight and flat with the three entrances (the main entrance, *valvae regiae*, and the two secondary entrances, the *hospitalia*) arranged symmetrically: the main entrance in the centre, a bit wider and higher than the two side entrances (see, e.g., the north theatre at Gerasa and the theatre at Philippopolis). In a

[24] See above, note 16.
[25] See below, pp. 41-43.
[26] See below, pp. 56-60.

few theatres, the main entrance is at the centre of a semicircular niche whereas the two lateral ones are at the centre of two rectangular niches (e.g., the theatres at Caesarea, Beth-Shean, and Petra). In two theatres (Bosra and the large theatre at Philadelphia), all three entrances are at the centre of curved niches, with the niche of the valvae regiae larger in diameter. Thus, while we can discern three basic design models for the scaenae frons, this division has no special typological or chronological ramifications.[27]

The stage building rose to a height of two to three storeys, in keeping with the height of the cavea. In a few instances where the stage buildings have been preserved intact or nearly so (see, e.g., Philippopolis or Bosra) one clearly sees how the cavea joins the walls of the versurae and forms with them a single horizontal line (see figs. 6, 40).[28] The scaenae frons was capped with a single-sloped roof which rose above the facade and extended between the two versurae. It was set at a 45-degree angle upward and served to protect the facade and the pulpitum and to provide shade, at the same time heightening the impression the architectural and statuary wealth of the scaenae frons made upon the theatre's spectators (see "Decoration" below).

In many theatres throughout the Roman Empire, behind the stage building we find public plazas, *postscaenia*, mostly rectangular in shape, where the theatre audience could relax and refresh itself.[29] In our region, such plazas have been found in the case of two theatres. At the Caesarea theatre, the postscaenium plaza is curved, a rare and exceptional design which but few parallels throughout the Roman world (see figs. 67, 71).[30] At the north theatre of Gerasa, the postscaenium is rectangular and is the con-

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[27] See e.g., Small, "Studies in Roman Theatre Design," in which he divides the Roman theatres into three groups according to the various ways of the design of the three entrances in the scaenae frons.

[28] The theatre at Aspendos is the best example in the Roman world for the preservation of a porticus encircling the upper part of the cavea and joining the two versurae; see de Bernardi Ferrero, vol. 4, "Aspendos", pp. 161-174, pls. XXXI-XXXV.

[29] Vitruvius already appreciated the importance of the postscaenia (V, 9, 1). A nice example of a postcaenium surrounded by porticoes can be found in the Leptis Magna theatre, erected at the beginning of the 1st century CE; see Caputo, 1987, pp. 51-54, figs. 133, 135, 137-138 (see here, fig. 151).

[30] See below, p. 68, note 131.

necting link between the theatre and the large plaza north of the northern *decumanus* (see figs. 90, 93).[31]

In theatres set upon rather steep slopes, such as at Sebaste, Gerasa (the south theatre) or Sepphoris, or in theatres near river-beds, such as the large theatre at Petra, one should not expect to find postscaenia, while in urban theatres with suitable topography such plazas may certainly still be unearthed. In the case of the two Philadelphia theatres, the agora below them served in effect as their postscaenium (see figs. 118-119).[32]

Dimensions

Since, as we have seen, there often is a connection between function, location, and size of the different theatres, it will prove helpful to divide them into four groups according to dimensions, as follows:

1. Tiny theatres—diameter ≤30 m.
2. Small theatres—diameter ≤45 m.
3. Medium-sized theatres—diameter ≤60 m.
4. Large theatres—diameter > 60 m.

Tiny Theatres

This group of indeed very small theatres, most of which may have served a ritual purpose, consists of the following:

1. Sahr
2. Kanawat
3. Beth-Shean (small theatre)
4. Gerasa (Birketein)
5. Elusa
6. Petra (small theatre)
7. Wadi Sabra

The small theatre at Beth-Shean may have served as an *odeion*, because of its particularly small dimensions and its location in the very heart of Beth-Shean not far from the large theatre, though we have no proof that indeed that was its origin (see figs. 59-60).[33]

The theatre at Birketein and the one at Wadi Sabra are ritual theatres located at sanctuaries. The exact purpose and function of

[31] See below, p. 72.
[32] See on the large theatre at Philadelphia, p. 84, on the small theatre, p. 87.
[33] See below, pp. 60-61.

the small theatre at Petra are as yet unclear, but it may have served for water games, if indeed evidence is found that it was connected to a special water supply system.[34] The purpose of the Kanawat theatre is also as yet unknown.[35] To judge from its location, the small theatre at Elusa is certainly an urban theatre, but at present we know too little to suggest that it may have served a ritual purpose.[36]

Small Theatres

A group of eight theatres:

1. Philippopolis
2. Hammat-Gader
3. Gadara (west theatre)
4. Pella
5. Shumi
6. Gerasa (north theatre)
7. Antipatris
8. Philadelphia (small theatre)

Only those at Hammat-Gader and Shumi functioned as ritual theatres, the others are urban theatres which were incorporated into the urban landscape and had no connection whatever to sanctuaries. The theatre at Philippopolis is located near the city's forum (see fig. 3). The west theatre at Gadara was built on the acropolis (see figs. 23, 25). Though the location of the theatre at Pella within the city's urban plan is not very clear, it seems to have been near the Pella Acropolis (see figs. 62, 63). The north theatre at Gerasa and the theatre at Antipatris were both well integrated into the urban landscape in which they were erected (see figs. 84, 116).

The Medium-sized Theatres

1. Sepphoris
2. Dor
3. Gerasa (the south theatre)
4. Sebaste

Of these the theatre at Sepphoris, Dor, and Sebaste are clearly urban while the south theatre at Gerasa forms part of the Zeus

[34] See below, pp. 93-95.

[35] The Kanawat theatre, practically speaking, lies within the city, but its location near the nymphaeon, the temple and a nearby fountain with which it forms a separate cluster located in a deep valley with abundant water, could indicate that what we have here is a small sanctuary which, even with its proximity to the city's centre, succeeded in preserving its purpose as a worship site. See also below, pp. 43-44.

[36] See above, p. 17, note 2.

sanctuary (see figs. 94, 95). The Zeus sanctuary was the city's ancient sanctuary and dated back to the Hellenistic period, and it is plausible that the south theatre of Gerasa became part of it in the same way as theatres were incorporated in the Hellenistic sanctuaries, for example, at Epidaurus, and that it may have functioned not only for ritual purposes. This further suggests that the building of the south theatre at Gerasa may have been in keeping with a tradition which had its roots in the Hellenistic sanctuaries, where theatrical activities were held also in theatres located in sanctuaries.[37]

The theatre at Sepphoris, exploiting a natural slope, overlooks the entire city. The theatre at Sebaste (Samaria) is also set on the city's heights, with part of it resting on the remains of the Iron Age acropolis (see figs. 104, 108).[38] The theatre at Dor is set in the northern lowlands of the city, near the seacoast, and its location is reminiscent of that in Caesarea (see figs. 33, 67).[39]

The Large Theatres

There are nine theatres in this group:

1. Gadara (north theatre)
2. Abila
3. Legio
4. Bosra
5. Beth-Shean (large theatre)
6. Caesarea
7. Neapolis (Shechem)
8. Philadelphia (large theatre)
9. Petra (large theatre)

All theatres in this group, except for the large theatre at Petra, are urban theatres *par excellence* and it is not surprising that they are found in the bigger and more affluent cities. The north theatre at Gadara is set on the city's acropolis, at the foot of which runs the main colonnaded street (*decumanus maximus*) of Gadara (see figs. 23-25).[40] The Abila theatre is situated in a natural depression eminently suited for the theatre's cavea foundation, whereby the two parts of the city stretch out over the two hills to the north and south of the theatre (fig. 31).[41] The theatre at

[37] On the southern theatre at Gerasa and its special status as a sanctuary theatre drawing its inspiration from the Hellenistic tradition, see below, p. 75.

[38] See below, pp. 77-78.

[39] See also below, pp. 50-51.

[40] See below, pp. 46-47.

[41] See below, pp. 49-50.

Legio is also set in a depression between two hills (see figs. 35, 37). Neither the Legio nor the Abila theatre has as yet been excavated. The theatre at Bosra was erected upon the city's lowlands, since in the city itself no suitable site could be found. It served the population of the city and the soldiers of the 3rd Cyrenaica Legion permanently encamped at Bosra (see figs. 38-40).[42]

As mentioned above, the large theatre at Petra has raised some questions for which as yet we have no answer. While some scholars see it first of all as a structure in which people would assemble for necrolatry rituals, others point out that its location was definitely decided mainly by the area's topography and that it actually is an urban theatre (see figs. 135-140).[43]

Finally, large and wealthy cities such as Gadara, Beth-Shean, Caesarea, Philadelphia or Neapolis often also had other theatres and/or entertainment structures such as amphitheatres and/or circuses.[44]

Construction Methods and Material

One of the crucial differences between Greek and Roman theatres is the way in which the cavea is built. In Classical Greek as well as Hellenistic theatres the cavea was always built on a natural slope that was hewn out and shaped to this end. In Roman theatres the cavea in most instances was set upon an artificial slope created by a system of inclined, circumferential, radial barrel vaults, though here, too, we find that at times advantage was taken of natural slopes, in particular for constructing the ima cavea. Thus, while all the theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia are Roman theatres, the imae caveae of all but one rest entirely or almost entirely upon a natural slope (the exception is the Bosra theatre which is built on level ground; see figs. 40-43).[45]

A small hill was often enough to hold the lower section of the ima cavea. If the natural hill was insufficient, an additional area

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[42] See below, pp. 53-55.

[43] See above, note 3.

[44] At Gadara there were two theatres and a circus; at Beth-Shean, two theatres and an amphitheatre; at Caesarea, a theatre, an odeion (as yet not located, but mentioned in the sources), a circus, and an amphitheatre; at Philadelphia, two theatres; and at Shechem (Neapolis), a theatre, a circus, and an amphitheatre.

[45] See below, pp. 53-55.

was dug out at its foot to create the desired incline. This was the case, for example, with the theatre at Caesarea, the north theatre at Gerasa, and the large theatre at Beth-Shean (see figs. 67, 86, 49). One entered these theatres from the outside on the level of the circumferential corridor that separated the ima cavea and the summa cavea. From there one went down for the ima cavea and up for the summa cavea.

A few theatres, e.g., at Sepphoris, Pella, Gerasa (the south theatre) and Shechem, are built on rather steep slopes, whereby not only the ima cavea but part of the summa cavea as well could be erected on a natural slope. The upper parts of the summa cavea were then set on artificial inclines.

The theatre at Bosra was the only one built on completely level ground and its entire auditorium was set on an intricate and complex system of vaults whose main components consisted of two barrel-vaulted, semicircular, concentric corridors and a number of radial corridors, also barrel-vaulted, which intersected them. This substructure, rising to a maximum height of three storeys, created the artificial incline which carried the three horizontal sections of the cavea (see figs. 42-43). While this is a familiar construction system in many theatres of the western Roman Empire, exceptional at Bosra is that it is built entirely of local basalt and no use is made of mortar.

The summae caveae of the theatres at Caesarea and Beth-Shean, for example, were also built as at Bosra, but occasionally an entirely original, i.e., local system was employed to erect these artificial inclines, as for example, at Pella, Gerasa, or Sepphoris, where the summae caveae rest upon an artificial fill carried by two semicircular, barrel-vaulted support walls. In the outer of the two walls a number of arched entrances were cut through which one entered the ambulacrum from where, via a number of vomitoria that ran under the summa cavea, one reached the cavea or, more precisely, the praecinctio. The vomitoria were made of two parallel walls and were barrel-vaulted. Sometimes, because of the topography, vomitoria were sloped, and thus had inclined barrel-vaulted roofs. It is this method of construction which gave the rear of the theatre (the part that encircled the cavea) with its semicircular high wall and arched openings, its characteristic appearance.

Each of the Nabataean theatres at Sahr and Elusa represents a unique construction system, though similar to the construction

system described above. The cavea of the theatre at Sahr is set upon a fill supported by two semicircular walls, one lower than the other. This fill was piled up between them, compressed and then shaped to suit the appropriate incline for the theatre seats. Two barrel-vaulted passageways were cut parallel to the centre line of the orchestra, on either side, and allowed direct access to the orchestra from outside the theatre. Another passageway ran in the centre underneath the cavea, perpendicular to the pulpitum line (see fig. 2).

The Elusa theatre's cavea also rests upon an artificial incline of pressed earth and gravel, supported by two semicircular walls. There is no ambulacrum as in the theatres at Pella, Gerasa, or Philippopolis, but the space between the two walls is simply filled up with earth, thus forming a support sufficiently strong to withstand the weight of the auditorium (see figs. 131-132). Since they might weaken the structure, no vomitoria were cut through. Instead, one entered through the aditus maximi, ascended via staircases between the two circumferential walls, walked around the cavea and from there chose one's seat by descending via the scalaria (see fig. 131).[46] Elusa's theatre is rather unique in its solution to the problem of an artificial incline to support the cavea, and also in the way it assures easy entrance to the theatre. Both methods guaranteed the solidity of the theatre and circumvented the problem of the vomitoria.

In five of our area's theatres, i.e., Sepphoris, Sebaste, Philadelphia (the large theatre), Petra (the large theatre), and Wadi Sabra, the caveae are hewn from the rock of the natural slope, and only their sides are built and set upon barrel vaults.

In the case of the large theatre at Philadelphia only the middle section of the cavea is hewn out of the rock to its full height whereas the two sides are constructed. In the large theatre at Petra, on the other hand, except for a small section at the cavea's eastern edge, the entire cavea is hewn out of the rock. At Wadi Sabra, too, it seems that the entire cavea is hewn (see figs. 120, 139, 145), while in the theatres at Sepphoris and Sebaste considerable sections of the cavea were hewn out of the natural rock (see figs. 11, 108).

The ritual theatre at Hammat-Gader was built on a natural hillside. The upper part of the hill may have been piled up artifi-

[46] See also below, pp. 89-91.

cially, though a circumferential wall that supported the cavea has not been located (see fig. 20).

The way theatres were constructed, their architectural planning and technical execution all demonstrate a high degree of excellence in virtually all aspects. Engineering and architectural problems encountered in erecting a theatre were surely far more complex than was the case in other public buildings. Each theatre posed its own problems which typically arose from its topology, spatial planning and the materials at hand, and the solutions found point to a form of architectural creativity which often was as original and imaginative as it was practical. Theatres were built of local stone: basalt, chalk stone, and even aeolianite. Unlike in the western part of the Roman Empire we find almost no use of mortar, and most public buildings were still being constructed with finely hewn stone. Marble was used only for decoration. Except in a few instances where the orchestra was paved with marble slabs (Beth-Shean, Caesarea), all parts of the construction itself were of local stone while for architectural decorations imported stone (marble, granite, alabaster) was used. The use of two different types of stone in one single structure is exceptional and can be found, for example, in the theatre at Beth-Shean where the sections that bore the main load were made of basalt while those that were more clearly visible (seats, stage building complex) were built of chalk stone.

Decoration

Theatre decorations can be divided into three principle groups:

a. Decoration attached to walls—architectural decoration in relief, such as engaged half and quarter columns, pilasters, and various architectural profiles.

b. Free-standing architectural decoration—columns bearing decorative entablatures; colonnades encircling the upper end of the cavea (the porticus); and the porticoes around the postscaenia.

c. Free-standing three-dimensional decoration—statues placed in niches or set upon *podia* in various places throughout the theatre.

The first group includes, for example, the pilasters engaged in the walls of the piers encircling the cavea in the Caesarea theatre, or the pilasters and the half columns attached to the walls of the versurae in the theatre at Bosra (see figs. 43, 46). Decorative relief

of a more modest scope can be found in the seats of the theatre, in the railings that separate the orchestra from the cavea, and, of course, in the decorations of the stage building complex. Seats for honoured guests found in the theatre of Shechem were decorated with reliefs of dolphins. Such seats, too, were a permanent part of the caveae of the theatres.[47] All decorations in this category were made of the same material of which the theatres were built. In a few theatres some decorations may also have been made of stucco and the plastered walls covered with wall paintings as, for example, at Caesarea.[48]

In the second category we find, first of all, free-standing columns which decorated the front wall of the stage building. Such columns stood arranged in groups parallel to the scaenae frons wall. Set upon podia, they bore an entablure which carried another such arrangement of columns, and sometimes even a third, e.g., the Bosra theatre. Columns were distanced so as not to block the three entrances set in the scaenae frons. Columns and entablatures lent depth to the high front wall and created an interplay of light and shade. The columns were made of local stone, marble of different colours, or granite, as were the entablatures. The front wall of the stage structure itself was always plastered, or even at times covered with marble slabs of various colours.

A considerable number of statues were discovered in the theatres of Caesarea, Beth-Shean, Neapolis, and in smaller theatres. The statues usually decorated the front wall of the stage building, where they were placed in niches set between the three entrances (the valvae regiae and the two hospitalia) that open to the pulpitum. At times, the statues were set on special bases (podia) at various places throughout the theatre area. The statues discovered were mostly of gods, but also of emperors or holders of high offices.[49] In most cases they were made of marble, but we also find simpler, more modest statues made of local stone, the product of local labour, such as those found at the Nabataean ritual theatre at Sahr.

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[47] See below, pp. 78-80.

[48] See below, pp. 64-69.

[49] About the three-dimensional decoration in the Roman theatres, see Bieber, pp. 223-226 (Sculptured Decorations); Lyttleton, pp. 263-265, figs. 182-186. The Leptis Magna theatre, which has been partially restored, offers good examples of free-standing three-dimensional sculpture at the edges of the pulpitum, in addition to statues that adorn the scaenae frons; see Caputo, 1987, figs. 136, 153.

While three-dimensional statuary was rather widespread in the decoration of the theatres in our region, relief decoration is almost entirely absent.

Conclusion

The theatre was born in Ancient Greece in that flourishing of artistic genius that gave the world the plays of such dramatists as Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. The theatre's structure crystallized on the soil of Greece and Asia Minor in a lengthy process of development that began in the fifth century BCE. It was a process which continued to respond to the changes in theatrical creativity as the Greek world, from the rise of the polis through the appearance of the Hellenistic kingdoms, finally fell under the domination of Rome.

When, towards the end of the first century BCE, Herod established the first theatre in Judaea, it had little in common with the Classic and Hellenistic Greek theatre. Rather, the first theatres in this region were "Roman" theatres, and only a few decades separate the first Roman theatres in Italy from the theatre at Caesarea.

Thus, the model for the Caesarea theatre lies in Italy and not in Greece or Asia Minor. It goes without saying that this has far-reaching implications for our understanding of the life and culture of Ancient Palestine towards the end of the Hellenistic and the beginning of the Roman period. The residents of the area—whether Jews, Nabataeans, or Hellenized Syro-Phoenicians—had little interest in or need for the theatre, even though it had been flourishing in the entire Greek world for more than four hundred years.

In effect, the theatre, when it was introduced into Ancient Palestine, was foreign to the vast majority of the population. Herod's initiative formed an ideological political manifesto intended to provide the appropriate setting for a Hellenistic kingdom which wanted to insure its place in the new order the Romans, under the vigilant eye of Augustus, were establishing around the Mediterranean Basin. However, although at first a cultural phenomenon which had little in common with the population to whom it had been brought, theatres became the major purveyors of entertainment for the urban masses of Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia.

GLOSSARY OF ROMAN THEATRE ARCHITECTURAL TERMS

(See Figures 148-149)

1. ADITUS MAXIMI (s. ADITUS MAXIMUS)
   Two barrel-vaulted entrances leading from outside the theatre directly to the *orchestra.*
2. AMBULACRUM (pl. AMBULACRA)
   A semicircular corridor that runs between two concentric parallel walls roofed with a continuous barrel vault. The *ambulacrum* supported an artificial slope upon which the auditorium was set.
3. AUDITORIUM (see also CAVEA)
   The seating complex.
4. BALTEUS
   A semicircular encircling passageway running between a low stone wall that bounds the *orchestra* and the bottom row of seats in the *cavea.*
5. BISELLIA
   Seats for honoured guests set in the *orchestra* area, on a number of low steps that encircled the *orchestra* near the low wall separating the balteus and the *orchestra.*
6. CAVEA (see also AUDITORIUM)
   The seating complex, generally divided into two or three horizontal sections: lower, *ima cavea,* middle, *media cavea,* and upper, *summa cavea.*
7. CUNEUS (pl. CUNEI)
   A wedge-shaped section of seats in the *cavea* created by the radial stairways (*scalaria*) that divide the *cavea* vertically.
8. HOSPITALIA
   Two side entrances set symmetrically alongside the *valvae regiae* in the front wall of the stage building (the *scaenae frons*).
9. HYPOSCAENIUM
   A space that extends under the boards of the stage (the *pulpitum*), between the front wall of the stage building and the stage front (the *proscaenium*).
10. ITINERA VERSURARUM
    Two entrances that lead from the wings of the stage building (the *versurae*) straight to the stage (the *pulpitum*). These en-

trances always parallel the two *additus maximi.*

11. ODEUM (L., pl. ODEA), ODEION (Gr., pl. ODEIA)
Though the source of the term is Greek, the *odeum* is a Roman building. It is a small roofed theatre-like building.
12. ORCHESTRA
An area paved with stone slabs, semicircular in shape, stretching between the stage (the *pulpitum*) and the seating complex (the *cavea*).
13. PORTICUS
A decorative colonnade stretching along the upper part of the seating complex (the *cavea*) behind the top row of seats; sometimes a wall also parallels the colonnade. Between the wall and the colonnade there is a raised roof which creates a shaded walkway encircling the upper part of the cavea.
14. POSTSCAENIUM (or PORTICUS POST SCAENAM)
A plaza often surrounded by colonnades that extends behind the stage building (the *scaena*), where those attending the theatre would rest and refresh themselves between performances.
15. PRAECINCTIO (pl. PRAECINCTIONES)
A semicircular passageway that divided the seating complex (the *cavea*) into two horizontal sections. In the large theatres there were two such passageways that divided the *cavea* into three horizontal sections.
16. PROSCAENIUM
A low wall usually decorated with alternating semicircular and rectangular niches that separated the stage (the *pulpitum*) and the *orchestra.*
17. PULPITUM
The stage, between the front wall of the stage building (the *scaenae frons*) and the *orchestra,* bounded by the stage wall (the *proscaenium*). On the two short sides, closing off the stage, are the stage wings (the *versurae*).
18. REGIA
See: *valvae regiae.*
19. SCAENA
The stage building. Its width and height are generally the same as the width and height of the seating complex. The *scaena* is usually rectangular. One side, the *scaenae frons,* faces the stage, another side faces the rear of the theatre, the *postscaenium.* The two wings of the stage building (the *versurae*) link the stage building with the seating complex.

20. SCAENAE FRONS
The front wall of the stage building that closes off the stage (the *pulpitum*) and faces the *orchestra* and the *cavea*. This wall contains the three entrances to the stage, i.e., the *valvae regiae* and the two *hospitalia*. The *scaenae frons* for the most part rises to a height of two or three storeys and is outstanding in its rich architectural decoration.
21. SCALARIA
Radial staircases that divide the seating complex vertically into wedge-like sections (*cunei*).
22. TRIBUNAL (pl. TRIBUNALIA)
Special separate seating for the city officials responsible for the organizations of the presentations (usually *tribunes*). The *tribunalia* were usually located above the two *aditus maximi*.
23. VALVAE REGIAE
The main entrance to the stage found at the centre of the *scaenae frons*. On either side of it, symmetrically arranged, are the *hospitalia*.
24. VELARIUM (also VELUM)
Cloth curtains that were hung above the heads of the spectators to protect them from the sun.
25. VERSURAE (s. VERSURA)
The two wings of the stage building. The *versurae* are attached to the two short sides of the stage building (the *scaena*) and closed off the stage itself (the *pulpitum*) on the two short sides. The stage buildings also allowed passage between the stage building and the seating complex.
26. VOMITORIUM (pl. VOMITORIA)
A radial passageway formed by two parallel walls and a continuous barrel-vaulted roof. The *vomitoria* allowed easy entrance, beneath the *summa cavea*, from outside the theatre directly to the *praecinctio*.

CORPUS

1. Sahr

The theatre at Sahr seems to have been part of the isolated Nabataean sanctuary in Ledja and lies 16 m. east of the temple there (fig. 2).[1] The theatre faces to the north and has an overall diameter of 21 m. and a width of 23 m. The orchestra is circular with a diameter of 10.25 m., which may explain the cavea's rather unique design, i.e., the cavea continues on either side of the orchestra and extends for 8.60 m. beyond its centre line.

There are instances, e.g., the large theatre at Philadelphia, where the cavea goes somewhat beyond the centre line of the orchestra, but then only because seats have been built above the two aditus maximi between the cavea and the stage building. While this is a common feature of Roman theatres both in our region and in the western provinces of the Roman Empire, the Sahr theatre seems to form the exception (see fig. 2).[2]

The cavea consists of seven rows, with seats 0.38 m. high and 0.50 deep. The upper row of seats is encircled by an aisle which on the outside is closed off by a wall almost 2 m. high.

Five scalaria divide the cavea into four sections, viz., two which are wedge-like, i.e., cunei, and two rectangular ones, forming the two straight parallel wings that extend between the mid-line of the orchestra and the wall that closed off the theatre at the front (see fig. 2). The location of the five scalaria follows the horseshoe arrangement of the theatre's cavea: one runs on the longitudinal axis of the theatre, two others on the mid-line of the orchestra, and two more run along the theatre's front wall.

The orchestra itself is enclosed by a 2-m. high wall; between it and the first row of seats there is an aisle 0.82 m. wide.[3]

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[1] Butler, 1919, pp. 441-446, fig. 387.

[2] The closest parallel to the Sahr cavea is to be found at the small sanctuary theatre uncovered at the sanctuary in honour of Artemis Namaia at Dura-Europos; see Brown, pl. XIII (below fig. 153). In one of the halls near the temple itself an odeion was uncovered whose cavea is very similar to that of Sahr. Two scalaria, arranged radially, divide the auditorium into a single cuneus and two straight parallel wings. Also here there was no scaena, and the entrance to the odeion was in the wall that instead closed off the odeion.

[3] High walls encircling the orchestra are found when the orchestra has been adapted to hold amphitheatre entertainment or naumachia, i.e., mock sea-battle

Apparently there was no stage building but instead a smooth solid wall, in front of which an elevated space built of stone formed the pulpitum which measured 10 × 3 m.[4] The theatre could be entered via three barrel-vaulted vomitoria which in effect run underneath three of the cavea's scalaria, one along the longitudinal axis of the theatre, the other two under the mid-line of the orchestra (see fig. 2).

The location of the theatre near an isolated Nabataean temple and its special design reinforce Butler's opinion that it was not used for mounting performances but served exclusively ritual purposes.[5] Since the theatre has not yet been excavated, many details about its construction and design are lacking.[6]

2. *Philippopolis*

The theatre at Philippopolis is located in the centre of the city, south of the forum (see fig. 3). It has often been reviewed and was excavated during the 1950s.[7]

The theatre is built on a moderate natural slope and, exceptionally, faces south (see below). Its cavea consists of two horizontal sections. The ima cavea rests for the most part upon the natural slope; nine rows of seats were divided by three scalaria into

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games, or "water theatre". Actually many theatres in both the western and eastern provinces of the Roman empire have an orchestra encircled by a wall high enough for such purposes. The Wadi Sabra theatre's orchestra is also encircled by a high wall, but there a water supply system leading to the theatre has recently been uncovered and it is certain now that what we have here is a "water theatre" (see below, pp. 93-95, figs. 144-147). The Sahr theatre has not yet been excavated and all our information is based on Butler's on-site survey, i.e., we do not know yet whether similar arrangements existed at the Sahr theatre.

[4] Other Nabataean theatres also lacked a scaena, e.g., the theatre at Wadi Sabra and possibly the small theatre at Petra as well. On the other hand, the large theatre at Petra and the theatre at Elusa did have stage buildings. See also above, Introduction, pp. 6-7.

[5] Butler, 1919, p. 446.

[6] Thus, we do not know whether the cavea was constructed by setting up a system of barrel vaults or by a semicircular supporting wall, as in the Elusa theatre. It is very well possible that the cavea was simply set on a natural slope, as, e.g., the theatre at Hammat-Gader (below, pp. 45-46, fig. 22).

[7] Brünnow and v. Domaszewski, vol. 3, pp. 169-177; Butler, 1903, pp. 390-392. The theatre at Philippopolis was excavated by a French expedition at the beginning of the 1950s; see Coupel and Frezouls, who also give a list of the surveyors who visited the site in the 19th century (p. 1, n. 2).

four cunei. The summa cavea rests upon two concentric walls which contain a barrel-vaulted ambulacrum.[8] Seven vomitoria in the outer wall lead to the ambulacrum from where a further three radially arranged entrances lead to the praecinctio between the ima cavea and the summa cavea.

The summa cavea had nine rows of seats divided by five scalaria into six cunei (figs. 4 and 5). One entered the orchestra, 8 m. in diameter, through two aditus maximi which were set at either end underneath the cavea. The orchestra was not, as usual, semicircular, but U-shaped (fig. 4).

The stage building and its wings, the versurae, are constructed as one solid unit. The versurae contain staircases. Two entrances, itinera versurarum, allowed passage from the versurae to the pulpitum (see fig. 6).

The scaenae frons rose to a height of two storeys, and had the usual three entrances, the valvae regiae, and the two narrower hospitalia. Between the entrances there were semicircular and rectangular niches. The pulpitum was over 22 m. wide and about 4 m. deep. Apparently columns bearing an entablature decorated the scaenae frons but these have not survived. The rear wall, the stage building's southern one, had three entrances through which one could enter not only the scaena but also the ambulacrum and from there the praecinctio.

The Philippopolis theatre, with a diameter of 35 m. and a stage building which is 42 m. long, is among the smaller urban theatres.[9] Its construction is very solid because of the black basalt stones used, though these give the theatre a somewhat forbidding appearance, and its limited space is put to excellent use, which is especially evident when one considers the way the entrances to the theatre have been arranged.

At the same time the theatre's location as well as its orientation seem a bit surprising. Despite its proximity to the city's forum and the public buildings around it, the theatre itself does not in any way seem to have been integrated into the urban pattern: There are no streets leading up to it, and neither is there a plaza of any

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[8] This system of construction is characteristic of a number of theatres in our region; see, for example, the two theatres at Gerasa (the south theatre, below, pp. 75-77, figs. 94-103; the north theatre, below, pp. 72-74, figs. 84-93), the theatre at Pella (below pp. 61-63, figs. 61-66), and the theatre at Sepphoris (below, pp. 41-43, figs. 10-14).

[9] Cf. the Table of Comparative Data on p. 98, and above, Architectural Analysis, p. 27 (dimensions).

sort located next to it.[10] As we already mentioned, the theatre's cavea faces south, an orientation which of the thirty known theatres in this territory it shares only with the theatres of Jericho, Pella, and Philippopolis. While in Jericho the theatre is part of a larger complex belonging to the king's winter palaces, in Philippopolis no acceptable explanation is as yet available.[11]

The theatre in Philippopolis, like the city itself, is dated with certainty to the years 244-249 CE.[12]

3. Sepphoris

The theatre at Sepphoris is located on the northwest slope of a hill upon which the ancient city of Sepphoris was built (figs. 10 and 11). The theatre was partially excavated in the 1930s by a team from the University of Michigan.[13] In recent years excavations are being conducted jointly by a team from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Duke University of the United States.[14]

The theatre faces to the east-northeast, with most of its cavea resting upon the natural slope which was hewn out in a way which shows that the location was especially suited to the cavea's semicircular plan. The stone seats in the cavea were set on steps that were hewn from the rocks of the slope (see fig. 11).

The cavea consists of three horizontal sections. The ima cavea has twelve rows of seats divided by three scalaria into four cunei, the media cavea, also with twelve rows of seats, is divided by four scalaria into six cunei, while the summa cavea has ten rows of seats which are divided into eight cunei by seven scalaria (see figs. 11 and 12). The theatre had a total of thirty-four rows of seats that could hold 4,000 to 5,000 spectators.[15] There are two praecinctiones which separate between the three sections of the cavea.

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[10] See Segal, pp. 83-87.

[11] On the theatre at Jericho, see below, pp. 87-89, figs. 129-130.

[12] On Philip the Arab, who built the city, see Segal, p. 87, notes 45-46.

[13] Waterman, *Preliminary Report*, espec. E. Manasseh, "The Theater", pp. 6-12 figs. 3-5, pls. XI-XX.

[14] Meyers, Meyers and Netzer, 1985, pp. 295-297; idem, 1987, pp. 275-278; Meyers, Netzer and Meyers, 1986, pp. 8-10; idem, 1987, pp. 16-17; idem, 1989, pp. 26-29.

[15] From the number of spectators a theatre could hold, it is tempting to speculate as to the size of a city's overall population. See above, Architectural Analysis, pp. 26-29, and the Table of Comparative Data, pp. 98-101.

The upper part of the summa cavea rested upon an artificial fill that was piled up in between two concentric semicircular walls and the barrel-vaulted ambulacrum they enclosed. Underneath the media cavea and the summa cavea three radial vomitoria gradually sloping down offer passage through the two concentric walls: one runs under the mid-line of the theatre and the other two northwest and southwest of it (see fig. 12). Arriving from the direction of the city, i.e., the southwest, and entering the theatre through the three vomitoria, the audience would find themselves in the praecinctio between ima and media cavea (see fig. 12).

The vomitoria were for the most part carved out of the slope, only their barrel-vaulted ceiling was built of fine, carefully hewn stone (see fig. 13). All three vomitoria were 2.20 m. wide.

The theatre's outer circumferential wall was decorated with engaged half-columns (see fig. 12).[16] The lower segment of this wall is well preserved and clearly shows the excellence of the building's hewn stone construction.

The semicircular orchestra, about 14 m. in diameter, was also hewn out of the stone and apparently paved with stone slabs. Two barrel-vaulted aditus maximi, each ca. 3.20 m. wide, led to the orchestra.

Though very little of the scaena has been preserved, we do know that it was about 32 m. long and about 5 m. wide (see figs. 11, 14). It was erected on a rather steep slope and had a supporting wall, but erosion caused the structure to collapse. Going by what remains of it the theatre's excavators have concluded that the scaena consisted of one solid wall that had no rooms behind it and also that the scaenae frons lacked the characteristic three entrances (see fig. 12).[17]

The pulpitum was originally made of wood panels covering the hyposcaenium. At a much later stage, the latter was filled in and the stage covered with stone slabs.

The theatre of Sepphoris stands out because of its fine construction and because of the way maximum use has been made of the natural conditions provided by the northeast slope of the hill. Set upon the highest site in the city, the theatre overlooks the valley below.

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[16] Waterman, pl. XI. The outer wall of the theatre at Caesarea was decorated in much the same fashion (see below, p. 66), a detail which is of course important when one tries to date the theatre.

[17] Waterman, p. 11.

The construction system that was employed, in particular the two semicircular concentric walls and the barrel-vaulted ambulacrum supporting the summa cavea is typical of the small theatres in our region.[18]

When the theatre was erected has not yet been conclusively established. The University of Michigan team that dug there in the 1930s is almost certain that the theatre was erected at the beginning of the 1st century CE by Herod Antipas, but does allow for the possibility that it may have been built in the days of his father, Herod the Great.[19] The theatre continued to function till the latter part of the 4th century CE.[20]

Too little of first-century Sepphoris has thus far been excavated for us to be able to decide to what extent the theatre was integrated into the city's urban landscape.[21]

4. *Kanawat*

The tiny theatre at Kanawat is situated in a gorge, at the foot of a steep rock and near a stream that flows east of the city (figs. 15, 16, 19). Though less than 200 m. from the city itself, the theatre's location must have made access to it from the direction of the city difficult. Today, Kanawat's new homes surround the theatre, but when Brünnow, Domaszewski and Butler visited the site at the be-

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[18] Though much smaller, the theatre at Pella is very similar in the way it has been constructed; see below, p. 62, and figs. 61-65.

[19] S. Yeivin, "Historical and Archaeological Notes", in Waterman, pp. 29-30, notes 50-53, raises the possibility that the theatre at Sepphoris may have been erected before Herod Antipas, i.e, by his father, basing his premise primarily on numismatic finds and not on an architectural- typological analysis of the theatre's structure. In Yeivin's opinion, Herod could have built the theatre along with his palace at Sepphoris, which was then restored or refurbished by Antipas (cf. Josephus, *Wars* 1, 16. 2). See also Hoehner.

[20] The resumption of excavation at Sepphoris has as yet failed to furnish evidence for the exact dating of the erection of the theatre, though it has been verified that the theatre was erected in the latter part of the 1st century BCE or the beginning of the 1st century CE. It is also clear that the theatre continued to function as such until the Byzantine period; see Meyers, Netzer and Meyers, 1986, p. 10; idem, 1987, p. 17.

[21] The Michigan excavators uncovered short sections of one of the access roads that led to the theatre, i.e., of a paved, partially stepped street leading to one of the vomitoria; see Waterman, pl. XII, fig. 1. Recent excavations have uncovered sections of other streets, between the "Mansion" and the theatre; see Meyers, Netzer and Meyers, 1989, p. 29. On the "Mansion", see idem, 1989, pp. 87-92.

ginning of the century, they pointed out the theatre's verdant surroundings, the abundance of water, and its isolation from the city.[22]

The theatre has a diameter of ca. 25 m. and is hewn out of the natural slope, except for the edges of the cavea and the entire structure of the scaena which are built of finely hewn stone. All seats are built and set upon steps which are carved in the natural rock. The cavea apparently had nine rows of seats, divided by two scalaria into three cunei (figs. 17 and 18). There seem to have been two additional scalaria running along the edges of the cavea parallel to the two walls that bounded the cavea.

The orchestra (diameter 6.90 m.) is paved with stone slabs and encircled by a stone parapet 1.30 m. high which separates it from the cavea. In the middle of this parapet an entrance leads from the orchestra to the cavea. An inscription next to it on the wall makes it possible to date the theatre to the period of the Antonine dynasty.[23]

There are two aditus maximi, 2.87 m. wide and barrel-vaulted, which give access to the orchestra from the outside. They separate the cavea from the scaena. Of the latter nothing has survived except its foundations and one course of the proscaenium wall with seven alternating rectangular and semicircular niches.[24]

The tiny theatre at Kanawat, or the "odeion" as it is called in the above-mentioned inscription, is among the smallest of the thirty theatres uncovered in our area till today.[25] Its location and relative distance from the city centre may perhaps indicate that this small theatre, like those at Shumi, Hammat-Gader, and the Birketein theatre at Gerasa, may have been part of a sanctuary where the Maiumas celebrations were customarily held.[26]

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[22] The theatre at Kanawat has been surveyed by many surveyors and travellers. While during the 1940s most of the accumulated debris was cleaned away, the theatre has not yet been excavated; see Butler, 1915, pp. 346-351, fig. 314, 316; Brünnow and v. Domaszewski, vol. 3, pp. 140-141, fig. 1035; Frezouls, 1952, pp. 61-63, pls. V, VI; idem, 1989, pp. 393-394, fig. 107.

[23] Waddington, p. 537, inscr. 2341.

[24] Frezouls, 1952, pl. VI (photo 11).

[25] Waddington, p. 537; see also below, n. 35.

[26] On the theatre at Shumi, see below, pp. 69-70; on the theatre at Hammat-Gader, see below, pp. 45-46; on the theatre at Birketein, Gerasa, see below, p. 71.

5. Hammat-Gader

The theatre at Hammat-Gader is located about 200 m. northeast of an extensive baths complex at the centre of Roman Hammat-Gader which lay in the verdant valley that stretched from the deep riverbed of the Yarmuk in the south to the steep slopes of the Golan Heights in the north.[27] The theatre was first surveyed by Schumacher at the end of the 19th century and was partially excavated by Sukenik in the 1930s.[28]

The theatre was built on the northeastern slope of a natural hill that today rises about 11 m. above its surroundings—part of the hill may have been piled up artificially so as to support the upper part of the cavea. The theatre faces to the northeast; its diameter is 35 m., and the length of the scaena is 19.60 m. (see figs. 20 and 21).

The theatre is entirely built of finely dressed basalt stone. The semicircular cavea's rows of seats were set on a compressed fill of clay and gravel that was put down on the hillside which had been dug out and shaped to fit the contour of the cavea. Neither Schumacher nor Sukenik provides information how the basalt seats were set in the slope of the hill.[29] It is no longer possible today to determine whether originally the theatre had more than the fifteen rows of seats unearthed by Sukenik.[30] These seats, also made of finely dressed basalt, are between 0.60-0.70 m. deep and 0.40 m. high. According to Sukenik, the theatre could accommodate between 1,500-2,000 spectators.[31]

The orchestra was semicircular, paved with basalt slabs, and

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[27] On the city plan of Hammat-Gader, see Hirschfeld, pp. 101-116.

[28] Schumacher was the first to locate and describe the theatre; see Schumacher, 1988, p. 154, fig. 54 (here fig. 20) for what is rather an imprecise plan of the theatre. Sukenik, who excavated the synagogue at Hammat-Gader, simultaneously conducted a brief dig at the theatre; see Sukenik, pp. 27-30, fig. 7. Sukenik's theatre plan is much more exact than Schumacher's, but it too has no information whatsoever on the scaena and the arrangement of entrances to the theatre (cf. figs. 20, 22).

[29] Y. Hirschfeld and G. Solar, who excavated the baths at Hammat-Gader, did not manage to re-excavate the theatre; see Hirschfeld, pp. 101-116.

[30] In Sukenik's opinion, the cavea of the Hammat-Gader theatre had neither scalaria nor a praecinctio. This seems surprising in view of the fact that even small theatres such as those of Kanawat, Elusa and Sahir had scalaria dividing the cavea into cunei. Since the other sections had already been destroyed, what Sukenik uncovered was only the cavea's central section and this may have led him to his conclusion.

[31] Sukenik, pp. 27-30.

with a diameter of 13 m. The aditus maximi were each 3.60 m. wide, barrel-vaulted, and separated the cavea and the scaena.

It seems that the Hammat-Gader theatre instead of the usual scaena had a solid wall which enclosed the pulpitum, along with its two short sides, from behind and which was connected with the walls of the aditus maximi (see fig. 21). The pulpitum rose to a height of 1.80 m. above the level of the orchestra and was about 28 m. wide and 5.80 m. deep.

The theatre's small dimensions, the way it was constructed, especially the design of the scaena without versurae, as well as the absence of a scaenae frons with the characteristic three entrances, and the fact that it was located near the baths—all lead us to assume that it was used for special rites and events closely connected with the therapeutic and ritual activities of the baths.[32]

6. Gadara: The North Theatre

Already at the beginning of the 19th century Seetzen had identified Gadara in the remains of the village of Umm Qeis, 28 kms. northwest of Irbid, on a height that rises 364 m. above sea level. North of the city stretches the deep gorge of the Yarmuk River and west of it the Jordan Valley (see figs. 23 and 24).[33] Schumacher was the first to make an exact survey of the city and a sketch plan,[34] which was recently updated by the teams of German and Danish excavators (fig. 25) which resumed excavation of the city in 1974 jointly with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities.[35]

Roman Gadara was laid out rectangularly over an area of 1,600

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[32] On sanctuary theatres, see above, Analysis, pp. 16-19. See also Frezouls, pp. 79-81, and Hirschfeld, pp. 102-107.

[33] Seetzen, pp. 188-190.

[34] Schumacher, 1890, pp. 46-80, with the city plan between pp. 46-47; see here, figs. 23 and 24.

[35] Wagner Lux, Krueger, Vriezen and Vriezen van der Flier, pp. 135-144, pls. 11-17 (the city plan on p. 136 adds many details to Schumacher's); Wagner Lux et al., pp. 31-39; Wagner Lux and Vriezen, 1980, pp. 157-161; idem, 1982, pp. 153-162, pls. 4-6; idem, 1984, pp. 87-90; Weber, 1987, pp. 531-533; Andersen and Strange, pp. 78-100, pls. 8-11; Mershen and Knauf, pp. 128-145; Weber, 1988a, pp. 349-352; idem, 1988b, pp. 597-611, which also contains a bibliography, a short review of the research history and an historical survey. On the history of Gadara and its status as one of the important centres of the Decapolis cities, see Avi-Yonah, 1966, p. 174; Geiger, pp. 3-16; Spijkerman, "Gadara", pp. 126-155, pls. 26-32.

× 450 m. Its east-west axis was a colonnaded street (the decumanus maximus), which ran the entire length of the city. Atop the eastern hill, the "acropolis", Gadara was rather level, and it is here that Gadara's two theatres are located. The larger of the two, the "North Theatre", lies in the northeast corner of the city's acropolis and faces the northeast.[36] The second and smaller theatre, the "West Theatre", is situated in the western part of the acropolis and faces westward (fig. 23).

Since the two theatres have not yet been excavated,[37] their description here is based upon the survey done at the site by Schumacher in the latter part of the 19th century and upon a study of aerial photographs.

The western part of the north theatre's cavea was hewn out of rock whereas its eastern part was constructed. The theatre's overall diameter seems to have been ca. 61 m. with the length of the stage building ca. 76 m. There is no information as to the theatre's number of rows of seats or their scope and configuration. The orchestra was semicircular with a 23-m. diameter (fig. 26).

Apparently, the cavea had two horizontal sections. The ima cavea rested entirely upon the natural slope whereas the summa cavea rested upon two ambulacra, one extending along the upper part of the summa cavea, its outer wall bounding the theatre from the outside, and the second along its lower part, with its inner wall closing off the praecinctio between ima and summa cavea (see fig. 26). Both ambulacra were barrel-vaulted as were the six radial vomitoria that traversed the ambulacra and gave entry to the theatre from the outside, their walls built of basalt and their barrel-vaulted roofs made of chalk stone (fig. 28). The seats of basalt which have been preserved are outstanding for the care with which they were dressed. Schumacher also has lavish praise for the construction of both the ambulacra and the vomitoria.[38]

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[36] While this may explain why on the city plan prepared by the German expedition excavating at the site it appears as the "East Theatre", we agree with Schumacher that "North Theatre" seems a more accurate name; see Weber, 1988, pp. 608-609, fig. 11; Schumacher, 1890, "North Theatre", pp. 50-54 and "West Theatre", pp. 55-60; see below, figs. 24, 25.

[37] The piles of debris that covered them in the latter part of the 19th century, however, have been cleaned away; cf. the aerial photo (fig. 23) with the one Schumacher presented in his book (fig. 24). Though Schumacher's plans are most sketchy, and his measurements, too, seem to be inexact, we still have none that are more up-to-date; Schumacher, 1890, pp. 49, 55, 58 (here, figs. 26, 27).

[38] Ibid., pp. 50-53.

7. Gadara: The West Theatre

The west theatre, according to Schumacher, has been better preserved than the north theatre (fig. 27).[39] Built entirely of basalt, it is also smaller: its overall diameter seems to have been about 40 m., the width of its scaena 54 m., and the diameter of the semicircular orchestra ca. 15 m.

The theatre's cavea apparently consisted of two horizontal segments: a summa cavea with fifteen rows of seats divided by seven scalaria into six cunei, and an ima cavea with five rows of seats divided by seven scalaria into six cunei (see figs. 27, 30).[40]

The ima cavea apparently rests entirely upon the natural slope whereas the summa cavea rests upon two semicircular concentric walls containing a barrel-vaulted ambulacrum, the outer wall of the ambulacrum also being the theatre's outer wall. Six sloping vomitoria set in the walls of the ambulacrum allowed entrance from outside the theatre into the preacinctio.[41]

The few architectural items Schumacher located show that the west theatre's construction was in no way inferior to that of the northern one. Between the two theatres is a distance of not more than 200 m. It is reasonable to assume that the area formed an open plaza with public buildings surrounding it. Even now, attractive segments of pavement are still clearly visible (figs. 23, 25).[42] Nevertheless, the two theatres do not constitute a defined urban complex; especially the fact that they face in different directions indicates that there was no planned or spatial connection between them (see figs. 23, 25).[43]

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[39] Ibid., p. 55.

[40] Schumacher acknowledges that there may have been more rows of seats in the theatre than he saw. Judging by aerial photos and other illustrative material it seems indeed possible that their number exceeded the twenty of which Schumacher reports; cf. Schumacher, 1890, p. 57, where he also presents a cross-section of the entire auditorium.

[41] The six vomitoria as they emerge into the praecinctio are clearly visible in the aerial photo (fig. 23).

[42] In the Byzantine period, a large church was built north of the west theatre, but in the Roman period, as well, there were public buildings on the acropolis; see above, note 40, and also Schumacher, 1890, pp. 60-64.

[43] When comparing the two theatres at Gadara with the two at Philadelphia, what immediately meets the eye is their difference in orientation: In Philadelphia, both theatres face the city's agora below them, which unites and joints the buildings and creates a clearly defined urban space (see figs. 118, 119), while at Gadara, the two theatres, so to speak, turn their back on one another and even though the expanse between them was designed as a paved plaza, there is no obvious relationship between them at all (figs. 23, 24, 25).

The orientation of the two theatres at Gadara, whereby topography primarily determines a theatre's location, is characteristic of many of the theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia. The theatres of Beth-Shean, Sepphoris, Pella and the large theatre at Philadelphia, for example, were all located on the slopes of existing hills.

At the same time, however, it is obvious that the course of the eastern section of Gadara's decumanus maximus was adapted to follow the northern outer wall of the north theatre, i.e., of the theatre stage building, whereas the structure and direction of the buildings erected north of the west theatre seem to have taken into account the location of the theatre's scaena (see fig. 25).

8. Abila

Abila, one of the cities of the Decapolis, was already identified at the beginning of the 19th century as the village of Quweilbeh, situated 25 kms. east of the southern tip of Lake Tiberias, 4 kms. south of the Yarmuk riverbed. The site lies 440 m. above sea level (see figs. 1, 31).[44]

Ancient Abila extended over two hills, Tel Umm el-'Amad in the south and Tel 'Abil in the north, which are connected by a saddle which makes for easier passage between the two hills (see fig. 31).[45]

On the east, the two hills are bounded by the broad course of Wadi el-Quweilbeh. Above the riverbed, across from the saddle, there are recognizable remains of a Roman stone bridge and a paved road which entered the city along an east-west axis and constituted the decumanus of Roman and Byzantine Abila. The southern hill has a general north-south orientation, while the northern one is generally oriented east-west, with the city's decu-

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[44] Abila was identified by Seetzen as early as 1806, which has since been generally accepted as such. Schumacher conducted a precise survey of the city and published his findings in 1889 together with some illustrations and an adequate map. Since 1980, archaeological excavations headed by W.H. Mare have been conducted under the auspices of American universities; see Seetzen, vol. 2, pp. 375-376; Schumacher, 1889, p. 30 (Schumacher gives the theatre only a few sentences, mentioning 73 m. [240 feet] as the theatre's diameter); Mare, 1983, pp. 37-65; idem, 1984, pp. 39-44; idem, 1985, pp. 221-237; idem, 1889, pp. 472-486.

[45] Mare, 1889, p. 473, figs. 1-2. The aerial photo and the general photo of the site from the east side clearly give the topography of the site, and should be compared with Schumacher's city plan (see fig. 31).

manus passing between them over the saddle. Other riverbeds bound the city: north of Tel 'Abil flows Wadi 'Abil, and west of Tel Umm el-'Amad, Wadi el-'Amad (see fig. 31).

From excavation reports and aerial photographs, it is clear that Roman and Byzantine Abila extended over the two hills as well as the saddle; extensive remains of public buildings, wall lines, and sections of paved streets are clearly recognizable on the surface of the entire area (see fig. 31). The area of Abila measured ca. 1,500 m. from north to south and ca. 600 from east to west.

The theatre is located on the northeast slope of Tel Umm el-'Amad and faces to the north-northeast. It has not as yet been excavated, but it would seem that the cavea rested on the natural slope, not on an artificial mound. The theatre's diameter has been estimated as between 73 and 80 m.[46]

A look at the overall plan of the city reveals that the theatre was centrally located, and thus easily accessible from both the northern and southern hills, with the decumanus to the north and important public buildings, including a temple,[47] to the south and the west of it.[48]

9. Dor

The theatre at Dor was excavated, on a limited scale, in 1950 by J. Leibowitz.[49] The theatre is located north of Tel Dor, 200 m. from the northern boundary of the city (see fig. 33).[50] It faces to the

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[46] While Schumacher has 73 m., the American expedition puts the theatre's diameter it at 80 m., even though the theatre has not yet been excavated; see Schumacher, 1889, p. 30, and Mare, 1983, p. 49.

[47] In his description and his city plan Schumacher places the temple close to the theatre, but this does not find expression at the site. According to the American excavators, the temple is, in fact, more than 100 m. away from the theatre; see Schumacher, 1889. p. 30 and Mare, 1983, p. 55.

[48] The American excavation team mentions the existence of an "odeion", located on the northeast slope of the northern hill; Mare, 1889, pp. 476, 479, fig. 8. However, since it is given no more than one sentence and Mare provides neither a plan nor photo of it, we have decided not to include the structure in the list of theatres described in this study.

[49] Leibowitz, 1950, pp. 38-39 (drawing 5).

[50] During the 1980s extensive excavations were carried out at Dor by the Archaeology Department of the Hebrew University, headed by Prof. E. Stern; see Stern, 1982a, pp. 103-110; idem, 1982b, pp. 107-117; Stern and Sharon, 1986, pp. 101-104; Stern, 1988, pp. 66-86; idem, 1987, pp. 153-159; idem, 1988b, pp. 6-14; Stern, Gilboa and Sharon, 1989, pp. 32-42. The Tel Dor expedition has not excavated the theatre, neither does it seem to have plans to do so in the near future (personal communication).

north-northwest, unlike the Caesarea theatre which faces westward (see fig. 32). From the topography it appears that the area in which the theatre was erected was rather level and that its cavea rests on an artificial mound. Due to the limited scope of the excavation we know only a few further details.

The theatre was built of chalk stone and not, as at Caesarea, of aeolianite (limestone found on the seashore).[51] It has an estimated diameter of 60 m. The orchestra (diameter as yet unknown) was paved with stone slabs.[52] Only a few sections of the scaena were uncovered at the time so we do not know its shape or plan. A number of differently sized granite columns and sections of a system of beams were found which seem to have formed part of the decoration of the theatre's scaenae frons.[53] Furthermore, a section of the eastern aditus maximus (width 3.20 m.) has been uncovered, and although its barrel-vaulted roof has collapsed, its two walls have survived to a considerable height and are remarkable for the fine way in which they were dressed.[54]

Also uncovered was a section of the praecinctio, which was about 4 m. wide and was built of carefully arranged stone slabs (see fig. 32).[55]

The theatre at Dor may have been similar in size to that at Caesarea (see Table of Comparative Data, p. 99). Pottery and numismatic finds, and the few architectural items that were recovered, enable us to date the theatre only very imprecisely to the 2nd-3rd centuries CE.[56]

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[51] On the theatre at Caesarea, see below, pp. 64-69, figs. 67-71.

[52] Leibowitz, and also the photos attached to Leibowitz's preliminary report found in the Dor excavation file in the archives of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

[53] Leibowitz, p. 18, drawing 5.

[54] Leibowitz reports that they dug down 4 m. between the two walls of the aditus maximus without reaching the floor itself, and that stones of the passageway's roofing were found in the fill; see Leibowitz, p. 39.

[55] From only a section of the praecinctio it is impossible to estimate the diameter of either the ima cavea or the orchestra, but when the line of the stage structure and the theatre's general diameter are known, one can arrive at a general schematic plan of the theatre—our fig. 32 is a reworking of the partial plan Leibowitz published in his *Newsletter*.

[56] Of what little was uncovered forty years ago, virtually nothing is visible today, i.e., the site is currently covered with sand, vegetation, and much rubbish, and only with great difficulty is it possible to make out a few sections of walls (see fig. 33).

10. Adraa

Ancient Adraa, today's Der'a, a city on the border of Syria and the Kingdom of Jordan, was located in the northern part of Provincia Arabia (see fig. 1).[57] While the surveyors who visited the place at the turn of the century could still report that the city's ancient constructions had been preserved to a large extent,[58] with the erection of a central rail depot as part of the Hejaz railroad and a Turkish military base in Der'a many stones were used for the construction of the new buildings.

The theatre at Der'a was unearthed only recently—the early reviewers make no mention of a theatre there. Our only information comes from the French scholar, Frezouls, who mentions its existence in a few sentences and provides a photograph of it.[59] Clearly recognizable (see fig. 34) are the orchestra, the edge of the pulpitum, and two barrel-vaulted passageways, i.e., the western aditus maximus, leading to the orchestra, and the western itinera versurarum, leading to the pulpitum.

11. Legio

The theatre at Legio was first located by Schumacher during a survey he made around Tel Megiddo before starting excavations there between 1903-1905.[60] Since the site has never been excavated, Schumacher's discussion of his findings in his excavation report together with sketches, a few drawings and two photographs are in effect the only information we have.

It is located near the southern slopes of a natural hill near Tel Megiddo on one side, and east of it, on the other side, the hill upon which today stands Kibbutz Megiddo, which made it possible to set the cavea of the theatre in the oval depression between these two hills (see figs. 35 and 36).

According to Schumacher, the theatre is oval-shaped and faces

[57] Little is known of the history of Adraa. It becomes a city only in the middle of the 3rd century CE, in the days of Emperor Valerian (256-260); see Avi-Yonah, 1966, p. 117, note 43.

[58] Butler, 1915, pp. 307-308.

[59] Frezouls, 1989, pp. 385-406 (on the theatre, see pp. 309-400, and fig. 111 on p. 400).

[60] Schumacher, 1908, vol. 1, pp. 173-177, figs. 258-261 ("Das Theatre"), vol. 2, p. 1.

eastward towards the valley; east-west it measures 71 m. and north-south, 52 m. (see fig. 37). Schumacher found a few architectural items, including stone seats some of which he sketched or photographed and included in the report (see fig. 37). Some of these seats were located later when the region of the theatre was surveyed in 1984 by Z. Ilan.[61]

The oval shape of the theatre suggests that what we have here could be a site which incorporates a theatre and an amphitheatre in a single structure, which was not unusual for a Roman city of the 2nd or 3rd century.[62]

Legio's theatre was apparently not within the boundaries of the city itself, which usually is thought to have been located southwest of today's Kibbutz Megiddo, but in its immediate vicinity. However, since the city and the theatre have not as yet been excavated, we do not know what connection existed between the two and how it was maintained.[63]

12. Bosra

Of all the theatres in the region, the theatre at Bosra is the most complete and best preserved. It is also the only structure in the city which over the past twenty years has been excavated and even to some extent reconstructed. Moreover, many surveys of it have been made.[64] That the theatre is in such an excellent state of preservation is due to the fact that in the Middle Ages a Muslim fortress was built around it. After the buildings that had been erected within the theatre had been cleared away, it was found to be almost completely intact. This, of course, also meant that structures that had existed in the vicinity of the theatre, in particular

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[61] Ilan, pp. 24-25.

[62] The best known of these, e.g., is the combined theatre and amphitheatre at Verulamium, in England (St. Albans); see Kenyon, 1975, pp. 5-9; idem, pp. 213-261.

[63] Legio was founded as a base camp town for the 6th Legion in the first quarter of the 2nd century CE; see Avi-Yonah, 1966, pp. 141-142.

[64] Brünnow and v. Domaszewski, vol. 3, pp. 1-84 ("Theatre", pp. 7, 84, figs. 928, 982, pls. L-LI); Butler, 1914, pp. 215-295 ("Theatre", pp. 273-276, fig. 241-243 pls. 14-15).

Clearing the rubble was already begun in the 1940s, but only during the 1960s were excavating and comprehensive preservation activities undertaken by the Syrian department of Antiquities and a Danish expedition; see Finsen; see also Frezouls, 1952, pp. 69-79; idem, 1989.

the colonnaded street which ran from the city's centre to the theatre, were destroyed when the fortress was built.[65]

The theatre faces north. Since no suitable place could be found within them it was erected outside the city walls (see figs. 38-45).[66]

The theatre was built on completely level ground. The cavea consists of three horizontal sections. The ima cavea originally had thirteen rows of seats, divided by six scalaria into seven cunei. Five vomitoria led to the praecinctio which separated the ima cavea from the media cavea.

The media cavea, which had sixteen rows of seats, was divided by six scalaria into seven cunei. A second praecinctio, onto which thirteen vomitoria gave access, separated the media cavea from the summa cavea (see figs 41-43).

The summa cavea had only six rows of seats divided by nine scalaria into ten cunei. Behind the summa cavea's top row of seats and decorated by a colonnade (porticus) a circumferential passageway encircled the entire cavea (see figs. 43, 48).

The cavea of the Bosra theatre was set upon a network of semicircular barrel-vaulted ambulacra cut through by radial barrel-vaulted vomitoria that led into the two praecinctiones—a complex substructure, three storeys high and entirely built out of basalt. Its construction is evidence of a high level of efficiency and sophistication. Even though the theatre's circular rear exterior is still hidden by the walls of the mediaeval fortress, its design seems to have been similar to that of, for example, the theatre of Marcellus in Rome (fig. 150).[67]

The semicircular orchestra (diameter 21 m.) is enclosed by a decorative parapet and could be entered via two barrel-vaulted aditus maximi. It was, with apparent care, paved with stone slabs.

Above the two aditus maximi, or rather above their entrances, tribunalia contain seats which customarily were reserved for distinguished guests.

Both sides of the cavea are bounded by the walls of the versurae which are as high as the front wall of the stage building and decorated with engaged columns, a continuation of the decoration of

[65] The walls of the medieval Muslim fortress encircle the theatre to this day, and it seems that for the time being the Syrian Antiquities Department intends to maintain the theatre in its current state; see Klengel, p. 116, fig. 112. On the "theatre street" that was recently cleared, see Azar et al., 1985, pp. 103-142, fig. 1, p. 106.

[66] Segal, pp. 59-63.

[67] See Nash, vol. 2, pp. 418-421, figs. 1210-1211.

the porticus. They have been well preserved (see figs. 46 and 48). Actually, Bosra's two versurae are simply solid walls joined with the sides of the scaena and separating the aditus maximi from the itinera versurarum and not, as in most of Roman theatres, rectangular or square structures that close on the pulpitum and the front wall of the scaena.[68]

The scaena consists of two solid walls, with the wall facing the stage, the scaenae frons, especially thick. The latter features the usual three entrances, with the valvae regiae set in a wide round niche, and the two hospitalia in two smaller semicircular niches. The scaenae frons has been preserved almost to its original (i.e., three-storey) height. It evidently had rich architectural decorations, including free-standing columns and engaged half-columns in all three storeys, and most certainly statues placed in the scaenae frons's rectangular and semicircular niches (see figs. 42, 44-45).[69]

The pulpitum, 44 m. long and 5 m. deep, consisted of wooden panels, laid out over the hyposcaenium. The proscaenium was designed as a sequence of alternating semicircular and rectangular niches.

Despite the fact that the Bosra theatre had been erected outside the city, it was integrated into the city's street network by a colonnaded street (see fig. 39),[70] with a decorative arch marking where this street branched off from Bosra's decumanus maximus (see fig. 39).[71]

The theatre's tall and impressive looking building must have served in the past, as it still does today, as a highly characteristic architectural landmark. The Bosra theatre is dated to the second quarter of the 2nd century CE.[72]

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[68] The versurae were also not found in the Roman theatre at Aspendos; see Bieber, pp. 208-209, figs. 700-703. Also, see below, the Beth-Shean theatre, p. 00, note 84.

[69] See the photographs in Klengel.

[70] See references notes 64 and 65.

[71] Segal, p. 55, fig. 127.

[72] Butler (see note 101) dated the erection of the Bosra theatre to the days of Trajan, close to the annexation of the Nabataean Kingdom by the Romans and the establishment of Provincia Arabia. But recent epigraphic finds at Bosra seem to point to the second quarter of the 2nd century CE as the date of the establishment of the theatre: see MacAdam; Freyberger.

13. Scythopolis (Beth-Shean): The Large Theatre

The large theatre at Beth-Shean was first excavated between 1960-1962.[73] Excavations also took place in 1963, and again during the 1980s when the municipality instigated its "Beth-Shean Excavation Project."[74] The theatre was erected south of the ancient city of Scythopolis, not far from the two main streets and important public buildings of the city's centre (see fig. 53).[75]

The theatre faces north and is built on a rather steep slope that runs from south to north in the direction of the ancient tell of Beth-Shean (see fig. 49).[76]

The theatre's cavea consists of two horizontal sections.[77] The ima cavea, which has survived intact, had thirteen rows of seats, divided by nine scalaria into eight cunei. It is set on the side of the natural slope that was cut out and adapted to its design. It is separated from the summa cavea by a praecinctio into which open eight vomitoria which ran under the summa cavea (see figs. 50, 54 and 55).

The summa cavea has been preserved only very poorly, to the extent that we cannot know even how many seats it contained. At the same time, however, most of the complex of vaults that carried the summa cavea have been preserved together with cementing material and small rough stones which formed the foundation for the stone seats and the scalaria (see figs. 50 and 51). Thus we can tell that the width of the media cavea was about 18 m. (com-

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[73] Applebaum. A. Negev participated in the theatre's excavation in 1962. In 1963, Asher Ovadiah dug at the theatre, see *HA* (April 1963), p. 16.

[74] Mazor, 1988a; idem, 1989, pp. 47-50; idem, 1988, pp. 7-45.

[75] Two streets are being excavated as part of the Beth-Shean Excavations Project.

[76] This slope, above the city's centre, was, of course, eminently suitable for erecting a theatre since the lower auditorium section could be set entirely on the natural slope. Behind the cavea one can recognize the areas that were hewn out in order to erect the large basalt pillars that bore the system of vaults which supported the summa cavea.

[77] Originally there may have been three, not two, horizontal seating sections, as e.g., at Bosra, (see figs. 40-43). An examination of the angle of the cavea and the diameter of the theatre shows that there was certainly room for an additional horizontal seating section. That is to say, what today is the summa cavea may have been the media cavea with a praecinctio separating it from the original summa cavea. The wall of the large basalt columns which encircled the theatre and remains of which are still evident in the area, may have carried this upper auditorium section. Equally plausible, however, is Applebaum's theory that the builders of the theatre originally intended to erect a larger theatre and, for some reason, in mid process cut back their plan.

pared to the ima cavea's 21 m.), i.e., it may have had twenty or even more rows of seats.[78]

The upper part of the summa cavea was set upon a semicircular barrel-vaulted ambulacrum through which passed the eight vomitoria, i.e., those who arrived at the theatre from the cavea side would go through the vomitoria to find themselves in the praecinctio from where they either went down to the ima cavea or up to the summa cavea.

The eight vomitoria were arranged in pairs, i.e., two vaulted passages in each of the eight vomitoria, which halfway through would connect and form one entrance to the praecinctio (see figs. 54 and 55).[79]

In the lower part of the summa cavea, behind the wall that closed on the praecinctio and opposite each of the scalaria of the ima cavea, nine round rooms were built, possibly *tholoi,* that could be reached via the vomitoria (see figs. 54 and 55). The exact reason for these rooms is unknown, but it has been suggested that they had to do with installations for increasing the sound volume ("sounding vases"?);[80] we know of the existence of such installations from Vitruvius.[81]

The orchestra is not entirely semicircular in that it extends beyond its diameter of 17 m. and thus is shaped rectangularly at the side of the pulpitum. It was paved with marble slabs. A circumferential passage (balteus) with a stone parapet separated the orchestra from the first row of the ima cavea. On the side of this parapet which faced the orchestra a stone bench encircled the orchestra.

A well-built drainage channel ran 1.80 m. deep against the proscaenium into which entered smaller channels that formed drainage system for the entire theatre. The main channel was covered with stone slabs and passed underneath the stage

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[78] Since it remains impossible to establish the diameter of the media cavea, one should, of course, be careful with conjectures such as these, especially here where we also do not know whether the theatre had another horizontal section of seats above the media cavea or a porticus in the upper part of the summa cavea.

[79] This arrangement may have been intended to alleviate the crowding of the audience when entering and leaving the theatre.

[80] The discovery of these *tholoi* engendered much debate as to their purpose and significance; see Applebaum, pp. 86-87, notes 13-15. See also Ovadiah and de Silva, pp. 85-97; Plommer, pp. 132-140; Izenour, pp. 39-40.

[81] M.P. Vitruvius, *De Architectura,* V, 5 (on "sounding vases" in theatres) (Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge, Mass. 1962.

building to hook up with the municipal drainage system north of the theatre.[82]

One entered the orchestra through two barrel-vaulted aditus maximi between the cavea and the scaena, above which one finds the tribunalia, the special seats for distinguished guests. Parallel to the aditus maximi and similar in design but narrower, itinera versurarum lead from the wings of the stage building onto the stage itself (see fig. 54).[83]

The scaena at Scythopolis consists of two parallel walls, the space between them 5 m. wide. Both ends of the wall facing the pulpitum were widened so that they could contain spiral staircases that gave access to the roof of the stage building and enter from the stage building to the summa cavea (see figs. 54-58).[84]

The second wall, the rear wall of the entire theatre building, consisted of alternating projections and recessions, and it had five passages that led from the stage building to behind the theatre (postscaenium).[85]

The scaenae frons has been preserved to a height of ca. 2 m. Of its three entrances the central one, the valvae regiae, is set in a round niche with on either side a rectangular podium intended to bear columns. No satisfactory explanation has as yet been found for the fact that the two secondary entrances, the hospitalia, are set so far to the side of the scaenae frons that for most of the audience they were simply hidden by the edges of the cavea.[86] Between the entrances remains of niches for statues,

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[82] This drainage channel was excavated again during the Beth-Shean Excavations Project, see *HA* 93, p. 12, fig. 5.

[83] The eastern aditus maximus and tribunalium were restored in the late 1980s; see *HA* 93, fig. 49.

[84] This element, too, is unique to Beth-Shean. While in the theatres at Philippopolis or Aspendos we can find staircases built around rectangular central solid piers, to the best of our knowledge there is no parallel among the Roman theatres to the spiral staircases such as those at Beth-Shean. Spiral staircases are found in temples, e.g., at the temple of Bel at Palmyra; see Seyrig, Amy and Will, vol. 1, pp. 61-64, fig. 33, and vol. 2, pls. 74-75.

[85] The postscaenium has not yet been excavated. Applebaum mentions briefly that beyond the back wall of the theatre there is a street which runs parallel to the outer wall of the scaena. Since excavations resumed, no street has as yet been uncovered in addition to "Paladius Street", which does not run parallel to the scaena (see fig. 53). It is possible that what Applebaum uncovered was a section of a postscaenium plaza and not a street; see Applebaum, p. 78, and below.

[86] Applebaum explains this somewhat strange phenomenon by the fact that construction of the theatre was halted before a third horizontal section of the cavea was built; see Applebaum, pp. 78-79. Similarly, in other theatres in our area, such as Bosra (see figs. 40, 42) or Philippopolis (see figs. 4, 5) as well as the

bases of columns and sections of an entablature indicate that the scaenae frons offered a sight of great variety in the colours and forms of its architectural decoration: marble and granite columns, statues, and many of the marble panels that covered the scaenae frons have all been found at the site (see figs. 57-58).[87]

The pulpitum consisted of wooden slabs which were placed upon a series of arches that ran perpendicularly to the proscaenium. The latter was designed in the form of alternating rectangular and semicircular niches (see fig. 57). The hyposcaenium has been preserved intact.

Beth-Shean's large theatre is built of basalt, except for those parts that were in full view for the audience inside the theatre, i.e., the scaenae frons, the seats of the cavea, the orchestra and the tribunalia which were constructed out of hard, bright chalkstone. The excavators have been able to come up with a large number of decorative architectural fragments, mostly made of marble coming primarily from Asia Minor. Also found were remnants of many statues.[88]

The large theatre was erected in the latter part of the 2nd or the beginning of the 3rd century CE and continued to fulfill its original function until the end of the Byzantine period.[89]

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odeion of Herod Atticus at Athens, a large part of the theatre's spectators could see the valvae regiae but not the two hospitalia. Another explanation, it seems to us, may be sought in the changes that took place over time in the way the various kinds of plays were presented in the Roman period, viz., while actually there was no longer a need for the three traditional entrances, these continued to be built out of respect for tradition, though builders were less careful about placing them at the centre of the scaenae frons. Cf. Bieber, pp. 212-213, figs. 712-716. On the odeion of Herod Atticus in Athens, see Travlos, pp. 378-386, figs. 492-500.

[87] To the extent that the Beth-Shean excavators intend to reconstruct the scaenae frons to its original height, according to A. Bar-Or, the architect who is in charge of the theatre's reconstruction.

[88] Fragments of statues had been discovered in the vicinity of the theatre even before excavations started. The excavations between 1960-1962 resulted in a number of statues while fragments were also discovered when excavations renewed in the 1980s; see Applebaum, Appendix I, "The People Scrolls of the Theatre of Scythopolis", pp. 95-96, and Appendix II, "The Statue from the Western Basilica of the Stage Area", pp. 96-97.

[89] The date of the theatre's erection Applebaum determined on the basis of an architectural and typographical analysis of the theatre building's various components, including its architectural decoration, as well as on epigraphical, numismatic, and pottery evidence. The recent excavations have corroborated Applebaum's chronological framework.

Meanwhile important new evidence has been uncovered about the continuity of the theatre's use. The stepped street that ran along the theatre on the east side of the cavea is clearly of the Byzantine period. It reached the passageways and entrances to the theatre and shows that the theatre was still in use in the 4th and 5th

While its precise location in the city landscape of Scythopolis will become evident only after the excavation of the main streets that stretch north of the theatre has been completed, it is clear already now that with two colonnaded streets extending north of the theatre and the important public buildings concentrated in the area between them, the theatre was erected close to the city's centre.

This also makes it reasonable to assume that the area behind the theatre, between the western end of Paladius Street and the rear wall of the stage building, is a postscaenium, i.e., a plaza rather than a street, as is also the case with the theatre, for example, at Orange.[90]

Located as it is on the rather steep slope south of the city and looking towards the valley that separates it from the city's ancient tell, the Scythopolis theatre, in effect, delineates the southern boundary of the city's centre. It is among the area's best preserved theatres. Moreover, its solid construction, the exceptionally rich manner of its architectural decoration, the choice of its setting in the overall landscape—all point to a city which at a time of prosperity decided to erect a theatre that was to reflect its affluence and power and in the construction of which it invested of its best resources.[91]

14. Scythopolis (Beth-Shean): The Small Theatre

Near the northeast corner of a large bath-house, part of a small theatre-like structure has been uncovered which the excavators, because of its small dimensions, have called an "odeion".[92] Since it has been poorly preserved, its original dimensions are difficult to establish, but its diameter apparently did not exceed 12 m. Its cavea was supported by a solid semicircular wall about 1.20 m. thick, only part of which still exists. Most of the theatre was de-

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centuries CE. Cf. Applebaum, pp. 88-93 ("The History of the Theatre"), and on the unearthed stepped street, *HA* 91, pp. 10-13, fig. 5, photo 9; 93, pp. 47-50, fig. 47, photo 48.

[90] See above, note 85. On the theatre at Orange (Arausio) in France, see Bieber, pp. 200-201, figs. 675-679.

[91] In addition to the large and small theatre (the latter possibly an odeion) the same complex contains an amphitheatre as well.

[92] Mazor, on the "odeion" in *HA* 91, pp. 9-10, fig. 4 (on the distinction between "theatre" and "odeion", see the discussion on the small theatre at Philadelphia, pp. 85–87, note 187).

stroyed in the Byzantine period when the large bath-house was erected (see figs. 59-60).[93]

Furthermore, remains of the orchestra show that it was paved with carefully placed stone slabs. The small theatre seems to have been connected to a larger building whose nature we do not know—it, too, was destroyed when the large bath-house was put up.

As to the purpose of the small theatre we can only conjecture. It may be that what we have here is neither a theatre nor an odeion but a hall resembling a theatre which formed part of a large communal building i.e., a bouleuterion or "council hall".[94] If it is indeed an odeion, it may have served cultural events which demanded but a small, enclosed space.[95]

The small theatre's orientation is different from that of the large theatre, and the two structures are also too far apart for them to have formed a defined public plaza, such as the large and small theatres at Philadelphia which are built on either side of the city's agora (see figs. 118-119).[96]

At the present stage of excavation, it is too soon to determine to what extent the small theatre was incorporated into Scythopolis' city plan.

15. Pella

The theatre at Pella was excavated almost completely in a few seasons of digs in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[97] It is the only public building of the Roman period unearthed so far at Pella. Near the theatre, a Byzantine church enclosure has been uncovered (see figs. 61-63).[98]

The theatre is located on the lower slopes of the hill of Tabaqat

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[93] Ibid., pp. 3-9, fig. 3; Mazor, 1989, "The Bathhouse", pp. 41-47, fig. 39.

[94] As, for example, at Miletos or Priene; see Kleiner, "Das Rathaus", pp. 72-88, figs. 52-59; Schede, "Das Bouleuterion", pp. 63-67, figs. 75-80.

[95] Bieber, pp. 220-222; see also below, on the small theatre at Philadelphia, pp. 85–87, note 187.

[96] On the large and small theatres at Philadelphia, see below, pp. 82–87.

[97] Smith and Day; the excavation of the theatre is summed up in "The Odeum", pp. 26-33, pls. 1-10.

[98] Since all the other structures, especially the Byzantine church, are much younger than the theatre, they cannot throw any light on how the may have been incorporated in the urban area of Roman Pella.

Fahl, near the wide riverbed of Wadi Jirm. To the south, across the theatre, on the opposite bank of the stream, lies the ancient tell of Pella (Tel el-Husn) (see fig. 62).

The theatre's dimensions are small: its diameter is ca. 30 m. and the width of its stage building is ca. 38 m. (see figs. 64-66).[99]

Of the western side of the theatre almost nothing has remained—according to the excavators of Pella, its stones were used in the building of the Byzantine church (see fig. 63).[100] Its eastern side, however, has been well preserved (see fig. 63).

The cavea, exceptionally, faces south,[101] and consists of two horizontal sections. Of the eight rows of seats divided by four scalaria into three cunei have been found in situ. The ima cavea rests upon a natural slope whereas the summa cavea is set on an artificial fill that is supported by two concentric semicircular walls which enclose a continuous barrel-vaulted ambulacrum (see fig. 64).[102] In the summa cavea the Pella excavators have reconstructed six rows of seats that five scalaria divide into four cunei, i.e., the theatre probably had fourteen rows of seats capable of holding about 1,000 spectators.[103]

The three barrel-vaulted vomitoria through which the cavea of the theatre could be entered from the direction of the city's centre were arranged symmetrically, viz., one on the theatre's central axis, perpendicular to the front of the stage building, and the other two east and west of it (see fig. 66).[104] The vomitoria led to an ambulacrum which was rather dark, lit only by the light coming

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[99] Because of its small dimensions, the excavators have categorized it as an odeum; see Smith and Day, pp. 20-22. However, they do not know if the theatre was actually roofed, which is a precondition for turning a theatre into an odeion. Thus, as with the small theatre at Philadelphia, which the Pella excavators also see as an "odeum" but which in reality is a theatre, the theatre at Pella to our mind should be seen as a little theatre; see below, note 187.

[100] Smith and Day, pp. 28-33.

[101] Exceptionally, since, except for those at Philippopolis and Jericho, all theatres face north or west, in order to minimize exposure to the sun. The only explanation which comes to mind is that the theatre was indeed meant to be roofed. However, in the absence of any evidence in this direction, the theatre's southern orientation remains peculiar.

[102] This construction method is characteristic of some, mostly small, theatres such as the one at Philippopolis (see above, pp. 39–41, figs. 3-9; Philadelphia, the small theatre, see below, pp. 85–87, figs. 125-128; or Sepphoris, see above, pp. 41–43, figs. 10-14).

[103] Cf. Table of Comparative Data, p. 99; also see Smith and Day, p. 23.

[104] As are the vomitoria in the small theatre at Philadelphia; see below, pp. 85–87.

from the vomitoria. From there three entrances gave access to the praecinctio between the summa and ima cavea (see fig. 66).

The rows of seats of both the ima cavea and the summa cavea continued above the two barrel-vaulted aditus maximi reaching the walls of the versurae (see figs. 63-66).

Very little has remained of the semicircular orchestra, which was 9 m. in diameter and paved with stone slabs. The western aditus maximus was found totally destroyed while the eastern one proved completely intact, though its excavation has yet to be completed.

The excavation of many parts of the theatre, e.g., the orchestra, the scaena and versurae, and the pulpitum, has been hampered by the high subterranean water level in the Wadi Jirm waterbed.[105]

A good many architectural items have been discovered in the theatre area and, in secondary use, in the church area. They were made of local stone and are outstanding for their fine workmanship.[106]

A typological analysis of the theatre's components, the abovementioned architectural items, and further numismatic and ceramic finds, have led the investigators of Pella to the conclusion that the theatre was erected in the latter part of the 1st century CE, with Domitian's reign (81-96 C.E.) as the most appropriate period.[107]

[105] The orchestra level, for example, lies 2 m. below that of the underground water, which has turned the theatre's excavation into an underwater dig. Since it is reasonable to assume that in the Roman period the groundwater level was much lower, but yet high enough to allow the stream's water to flood the orchestra, the theatre's excavators have raised the possibility that as in Gerasa-Birketein, (see below, p. 71), or Shumi (see below, pp. 69–70) it was possible also in the theatre at Pella to hold the Maiumas festivities; see above, Introduction, p. 11, note 33, and also Smith and Day, pp. 26-27.

[106] Smith and Day, p. 26.

[107] Ibid., pp. 27-28. No inscriptions at all were found at the Pella theatre and the dating is based entirely upon the stratigraphic and typological analysis of the theatre building and the findings discovered therein. The theatre's excavators are of the opinion that it is not very helpful to try and date the theatre on the basis of a comparative analysis with other theatres that have been dated with certainty (see Smith and Day, p. 28). Together with the stratigraphy and the numismatic and the pottery finds, they base themselves instead primarily upon the typology of the Roman odeum as suggested by Meinel, pp. 291-296. In their opinion, the Pella theatre fits well into the group of eastern Roman odea. The earliest of these is the odeum at Corinth dated to the second half of the 1st century CE, whereas the odeum at Philadelphia is a later example (the second half of the 2nd century CE). The latest in the group of the eastern odea is that of Philippopolis

Since Roman Pella has not yet been excavated, we can form no idea as to how the theatre fit into the city's landscape.[108]

16. Caesarea

The oldest of the theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia,[109] the theatre at Caesarea was erected as part of King Herod's most ambitious construction projects, i.e., the city and port of Caesarea.[110] It was located 650 m. south of the port and 75 m. from the seashore (see fig. 67), and faces north-northwest. The Caesarea theatre seems also to have functioned for the longest period, and was still serving its original purpose in the 4th and even 5th century.[111] Over time the theatre underwent far-reaching changes, especially in the way stage and orchestra were arranged.[112]

The theatre was excavated between 1959-1963 by an Italian

(mid-3rd century CE). The excavators date the building at Pella to the last quarter of the 1st century CE, but add that one should not rule out the possibility that it was erected somewhat later, i.e., at the beginning of the 2nd century; see Smith and Day, p. 28.

[108] The excavators suggest that the theatre fell out of use a short time before the erection of the nearby church in the 4th century CE, though it is possible that it continued to serve as a small assembly hall during the 4th-5th centuries, i.e., even after the church was erected. Certain is that beginning with the 4th century stones of the theatre were taken and used for the building of the Byzantine church sanctuary. Important to know, but today impossible, would have been whether the church was erected in place of or near to public buildings of the Roman period which could have testified to the theatre's incorporation in the urban landscape of Pella; see Smith and Day, pp. 28-33.

[109] A theatre at Antioch in northern Syria preceded the Caesarea theatre by a few decades—it seems that Julius Caesar, when he spent some time in the city in 47 BCE, built the theatre or renewed a more ancient theatre; see Downey, 1961, p. 155. The theatre itself has not yet been located and the only testimony we have comes from Malalas; see Malalas 216.21-217.4, in Schenk.

[110] Cf. Josephus, *Wars* 1, 415, *Antiquities* 15, 341. For the establishment of Caesarea, see Shalit, pp. 330-341; Ringel, espec. pp. 47-51; Levine, 1975a, espec. pp. 23-26; Foerster, pp. 9-22; Lifshitz, pp. 490-518; Toombs, pp. 223-232; Raban.

[111] Literary as well as archaeological evidence points to this. Cf., e.g., Levine, 1975a, pp. 24-25, who lists the Talmudic and early Christian sources on the theatrical activities at Caesarea; Ringel, p. 49; Frova, "Il Teatro Imperiale", especially pp. 183-184, and, for a discussion of the Byzantine fort that was built around the theatre in the days of Justinian (6th century CE), "La Fortezza", pp. 159-165.

[112] For an attempt to reconstruct the stage building's facade in the Herodian period, see Frova, pp. 128-134, figs. 146-147; for the orchestra, see ibid., pp. 88-92, figs. 72, 143. See also below.

team headed by A. Frova. Their detailed report on the dig was published in 1966.[113]

The theatre was built of local aeolianite.[114] Part of its cavea was set on the natural slope of a small hill and part on an artificial incline. Its dimensions put it in the category of the large theatres.[115] Its diameter is ca. 62 m. (if one also considers the plaza behind the stage building this would be about 88 m.). The length of the stage building is ca. 67 m. and its width ca. 9 m. The pulpitum itself is ca. 33 m. long and ca. 4.50 m. wide (see figs. 70 and 71).

The theatre's cavea, semicircular in shape, consists of two horizontal sections: the ima cavea has survived completely intact, with thirteen rows of seats divided by five scalaria into six cunei. A rectangular area, 2.00 × 3.40 m. paved with stone slabs and facing the centre of the stage, may have been used for distinguished guests.[116]

The praecinctio, which separates the ima cavea from the summa cavea, is 2 m. wide and paved with stone slabs.

The summa cavea is much less well preserved than the ima cavea, which makes it impossible to know exactly how many rows of seats there were, though one assumes there were at least more than twenty.[117] Thus, the cavea's more than thirty rows of seats could hold 3,500-4,000 spectators.[118] The summa cavea was apparently divided by six scalaria into seven cunei (see figs. 68, 70). Six

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[113] The report is accompanied by a wealth of illustrative material. Of the thirty theatres described in this study, detailed studies have actually been published on only five (Philippopolis, Bosra, Caesarea, Pella and Petra).

[114] The Caesarea theatre is the only one among the region's theatres built of aeolianite, which is not noted for durability and quality. As the excavators have pointed out, many areas of the theatre were coated with a layer of plaster; see Frova, pp. 93-112, fig. 85, pl. I.

[115] See below, Table of Comparative Data, p. 99, and above, Architectural Analysis, pp. 28-29.

[116] Among the theatres of Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia there are only a few parallels; see, e.g., the theatre at Elusa, pp. 89–91.

[117] This is a decidedly cautious evaluation based upon a simple calculation of the diameter of the summa cavea and the width of a single row of seats. However, there is no way of knowing how the upper part of the summa cavea was designed, which may have contained a wide circumferential corridor that went with the porticus, as in the Bosra theatre. Such a corridor would inevitably have reduced the number of rows of seats in the upper part of the summa cavea. In their chapter on the reconstruction of the theatre, the Italian excavators cite exact data about the seats and how they were incorporated in the rows of the ima cavea (cf. Frova, pp. 187-192, "Il Restauro", figs. 232-234).

[118] Calculation based on the length of all rows of seats and the fact that a viewer's seating comfort required 0.45 to 0.50 m.

pairs of vomitoria with inclined barrel-vaulted roofs ran under the summa cavea and gave spectators access from outside the theatre to the praecinctio.[119]

The summa cavea was supported by two semicircular walls enclosing a barrel-vaulted ambulacrum (see figs. 68, 70). In the outer, i.e., the exterior wall of the theatre, arches formed the entrances to the vomitoria. Thus, looking towards the theatre's cavea from the outside one was offered the characteristic sight of many Roman theatres and amphitheatres, i.e., a series of solid supporting piers set in a semicircle and connected by vaults, their faces decorated with pilasters (see fig. 150).[120]

The ground level behind the theatre's cavea was the same as that of the praecinctio, and spectators could with ease move through the vomitoria directly into the praecinctio from where they chose their seats either down to the ima cavea or up to the summa cavea (see fig. 67).

The semicircular orchestra (ca. 17 m. in diameter) underwent numerous changes during the four centuries it was in use. As the excavators attest, the area of the orchestra was made out of plaster with painted geometric forms. Over the years, this plaster was refurbished, repaired, and repainted many times.[121] Only at a later stage, apparently in the latter part of the 2nd or the early 3rd century CE, was the orchestra paved with marble slabs of different colours.[122] In the end, apparently during the 4th century, it was encircled with a 1.20 m. high wall and adapted to serve as a pool. Arrangements were made to make the orchestra waterproof and water was brought in by pipes from a pool built north of the stage building near the northern aditus maximus (see figs. 70-71).[123]

The two aditus maximi, which led to the orchestra, were 3 m.

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[119] At a later stage part of the vomitoria for some reason was sealed off, and instead of the pairs of passageways single passageways were left; see Frova, pp. 74-83, figs. 40, 41, 58. The barrel vaults in the vomitoria are remarkable for their workmanship, especially at the joints between the horizontal barrel vaults and the sloping ones; see Frova, figs. 57, 59.

[120] See, for example, the theatre of Marcellus in Rome, which was built at approximately the same period; see Nash, pp. 418-421, fig. 1211 (see here, fig. 150). The rear wall of the Sepphoris theatre was also decorated with half-columns; see above, p. 42.

[121] Frova, pp. 88-112, figs. 72-92, pls. II-IV.

[122] Ibid., pp. 93-117, figs. 79-80, 99.

[123] On the phenomenon of water games and turning the orchestra in Roman theatres into a pool, see above, notes 31, 36. For the discovery of the pool and the system of pipes that brought the water from the pool to the orchestra, see Frova, p. 125-128, 138, figs. 136-138.

wide and barrel-vaulted. The northern aditus maximus is the better preserved of the two. Its roof consists of alternating segments of horizontal and sloped barrel vaults, since the ground shows a gradual slope toward the orchestra.[124]

More than any other of the Caesarea theatre's components, it is the stage building (scaena) that underwent far-reaching structural changes. The excavators have made an attempt at reconstructing the original Herodian design of the stage building, but too little has remained of that period for their suggestion to be adequate.[125]

The reconstruction of the scaena as it existed in the latter part of the 2nd century CE and the beginning of the 3rd appears more convincing.[126] In its later phase, the stage building was rectangular in shape, 67 m. long and ca. 9 m. wide. It consisted mainly of a solid 2-m. thick wall which at its centre had a semicircular niche, its aperture about 17 m. forming the main entrance, i.e., the valvae regiae, with either side of the smaller, rectangular niche that contained the hospitalia. Rich architectural decoration, which included marble columns of different colours bearing an entablature, statues, and reliefs,[127] rested upon the front wall of the stage building, which explains why it was 2 m. thick. It is assumed that the scaenae frons rose to a height of at least two storeys, i.e., its top reached the same height as that of the cavea.[128]

The length of the scaenae frons was about 50 m. which means that north and south of it there remained 8-m. long spaces shaped as rectangular rooms. These rooms extended between the

[124] Ibid., pp. 121-123, figs. 128-135. As in the case of the vomitoria, the construction of the (alternating horizontal and sloping) barrel vaults shows excellent workmanship.

[125] What was unearthed by the Italian excavators of the stage building, and especially the scaenae frons, belongs to the latter part of the 2nd and beginning of the 3rd century CE, when the theatre underwent repairs and some far-reaching changes, e.g., the scaenae frons was rebuilt and richly decorated with columns, an entablature, and statues, all made of marble of different colours. See Frova, pp. 128-145, figs. 146-147.

[126] As reconstructed by the excavators (ibid., fig. 147) the design of the scaenae frons is very similar to that of the theatre at Palmyra; see Bieber, fig. 707.

[127] For the statues and reliefs found by the Italian excavators, see "I sculpture e i rilievi" in Frova, pp. 193-216.

[128] In those few of the theatres that have survived at their full height, such as the theatre at Orange, Aspendos, or Bosra, the top ridge of the cavea is of the same height as the top of the scaena, see Bieber, pp. 207-209, figs. 700-703 (on Aspendos); ibid., p. 201, figs. 675-678 (on Orange); on Bosra, see above, pp. 53-55, figs. 38-48.

rear wall that was part of the stage building and the walls of the building's short sides (see fig. 71). They may have held the staircases and served in effect as smaller substitutes for the stage building's wings (the versurae).[129]

It seems that the short side walls and the rear wall of the scaena were smooth and devoid of ornamentation. In the centre of the stage building's rear wall an opening (the continuation of the valvae regiae) led from the stage building to the postscaenium, the plaza outside the theatre (see figs. 67, 71).

The pulpitum itself was 33 × 4.50 m. The proscaenium, which separated it from the orchestra, was designed with alternating rectangular and semicircular niches. The stage floor consisted of wooden boards placed upon an arrangement of ten pillars erected within the hyposcaenium (see fig. 67).[130]

The Caesarea theatre is one of only two theatres in our region for which the plaza behind the stage building, the postscaenium, has been located.[131] Its design is rather unique: instead of the usual rectangular or square, it is curve shaped (see figs. 67, 71),

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[129] The versurae close off the two short walls of the pulpitum, are either square or rectangular, and often contain stairwells or even additional rooms to facilitate the proper functioning of the theatre. In many Roman theatres, the space between the two parallel walls of the scaena is often so narrow, it cannot be put to much use; the scaena may even be built of a single solid wall that is also the scaenae frons. Thus, the versurae buildings provided much needed extra space while connecting the stage and seating complexes (the porticus at the upper end of the cavea, in most cases, gave access to the versurae buildings). In addition, we generally find wide passageways, similar in design to the aditus maximi, that lead from the versurae directly to the pulpitum (for example, at Beth-Shean, see above, pp. 56-60, fig. 54). These itinera versurarum run parallel to the aditus maximi.

In the case of Caesarea, not just the scaena but the versurae as well offered very little space, with the thick wall of the scaenae frons taking up almost the entire scaena; the spaces between it and the narrow rear wall of the scaena were certainly too small to be of use, the versurae buildings only holding the staircases (see figs. 70, 71).

[130] Frova, pp. 145-155, "L'Iposcenio", figs. 188-212, 236.

[131] Ibid., pp. 155-159, "La Piazza dietro la scena", figs. 155-218. In his chapter on the theatre, Vitruvius points out the great importance of the postscaenium plaza where the audience could relax and refresh itself (see Vitruvius, *De Architectura* V, 9, 1). In a few theatres we find rectangular and square plazas near the rear wall of the scaena, for example, the plaza at the theatre of the Leptis Magna which was paved with stone slabs and surrounded by colonnades, also built in the days of Augustus; see Bieber, pp. 207-208; Caputo, 1987, plan VII (see here, fig. 51). We find a similar plaza at the theatre in Orange, in southern France; see Bieber, pp. 200-201, figs. 675-678. The theatre at Thugga/Dugga, in Tunisia, had a postscaenium plaza designed in a manner much similar to the one at Caesarea, see ibid., p. 205, fig. 689; Small, pp. 55-68, fig. 16; Carton, p. 205, figs. 689-692.

about 63 m. long and with a maximum width (diameter) of about 23 m. The plaza was paved with stone slabs and surrounded by a wall.

Till recently, a puzzling aspect of the theatre at Caesarea was its location—south of the city, rather far from the centre and the city's public buildings. Caesarea was a new city laid out and built by Herod according to a preconceived plan and along with other public buildings naturally included a theatre erected presumably in the centre of the city, not on the outskirts. Excavations in the summer of 1993 have now brought to light a Herodian circus which occupies the area between Caesarea's centre and the theatre.[132]

17. Shumi

The theatre at Shumi is located at the foot of the sloping south-western hills of the Carmel range, 5 kms. from Caesarea (see figs. 72 and 73). It was first surveyed by a Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) team in the latter days of the 19th century, who were the first to sketch a schematic plan of the theatre (fig. 74).[133] Excavation of the theatre was begun in 1987.[134] E. Shenhav, the theatre's excavator, has been able to recognize two clear stages in the history of the structure: one the earlier, original stage, which dates to the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, and the second, dating from the Byzantine period. It seems that throughout the theatre served its original purpose.

Since the area where the theatre is located was settled continuously till the beginning of the 20th century, few sections of the original building have survived, which makes it difficult today to reconstruct the theatre's original plan and accurately to ascertain its shape, form of construction and way of decoration.

However, the orchestra which has been completely excavated proves to have been preserved as it was designed originally. It has a diameter of ca. 13 m. and is bounded by a semicircle of three

[132] Personal communication, Dr. J. Porath, Israel Antiquities Authority; see also above, Architectural Analysis, pp. 19-20, notes 12-15.

[133] Conder and Kitchener, 1881-83, pp. 66-67.

[134] Under the auspices of Israel's Antiquities Authority and the Jewish National Fund and headed by E. Shenhav; see Shenhav, 1990b, pp. 53-55, fig. 54; idem, 1990a, pp. 58-62.

low steps (bisellia) (cf. the orchestra of the theatre at Shechem, below fig. 110). Similarly, part of the proscaenium has been preserved and excavated, which shows that it was decorated with alternating semicircular and rectangular niches. The excavator has also been able to locate the base of the wall which served as the boundary of the eastern part of the cavea and carried the barrel vault of the eastern aditus maximus.

Even though the shape of the building that was erected on the cavea in the previous century (see figs. 72, 75) makes it possible to fix its contour with a great degree of certainty, it is difficult at this stage to decide its exact scope. The surveyors of the PEF simply sketched the lay-out of the cavea according to the curved wall of the existing structure (see fig. 74). They also mention that the cavea as they found it was surrounded by two concentric walls that supported a circumferential barrel vault. From this one may deduct that the theatre had an ima cavea which rested upon a natural slope, and a summa cavea, which has not survived, that was supported by an ambulacrum, as, e.g., in the theatre at Pella (see fig. 66).[135] The diameter of the combined ima and summa cavea, it would seem, was about 25 m.

Except for its foundations, which were later used for other buildings that still exist today, little has remained of the stage building. Apparently, it was about 35 m. long and, together with the pulpitum and the versurae, about 10 m. wide.

The theatre at Shumi probably formed part of an open sanctuary and thus fulfilled the same function for Caesarea as did the theatre at Hammat-Gader, for example, for Gadara or the theatre at Birketein for Gerasa.[136] Historiographic and literary evidence would seem to corroborate this claim, while a statue of the god Asklepios which was dug up at the site seems to indicate that the place was also visited for therapeutic reasons. The theatre's proximity to the springs and aqueduct of Caesarea raises the possibility that as other theatres in the area, the theatre in Shumi, too, was used for water games during the Maiumas festivities.[137]

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[135] On the Pella Theatre, see above, pp. 61-64, figs. 64-66.

[136] On the theatre at Hammat-Gader, see above, pp. 45-46, figs. 20-22; on the theatre at Birketein near Gerasa, see below, p. 71, figs. 79-83.

[137] On the Maiumas festivities, see above, Introduction, p. 11, note 33.

18. Birketein

At a distance of 1,500m. to the north of Gerasa lies an open sanctuary containing a large, double pool (hence its present Arabic name), around which there are many recognizable remains of constructions, including a theatre and graves (see figs. 79 and 80).[138] Epigraphic finds show that the site was customarily used for the Maiumus festivities,[139] and echoes of these festivities are also found in literary sources.[140]

It seems that the site was chosen for the building of a sanctuary because of its convenient location near the city, the abundance of water, and its verdant surroundings. Between the double pool and the theatre a gate marked the entrance to the open sanctuary and the end of the *via sacra* which began at the northern gate of Gerasa. Within the site the road continued westward and led from the gate to the pool and the foot of the theatre. The pool, which measures 43.5 x 88.5 m., was surrounded by colonnades.

The theatre, situated opposite the southwest corner of the pool, rested upon the slope of a hill, about 8 m. above the level of the pool (fig. 82). The theatre's cavea, entirely set on the natural slope, has fourteen rows of seats, divided by five scalaria into four cunei (see fig. 81). The two aditus maximi separating the cavea and the scaena were barrel-vaulted and led from outside the theatre directly into the orchestra (diameter 9 m.). The scaena only partially survived so that its plan and mode of design are insufficiently clear—it may have been kept intentionally low so as to allow a clear view from the cavea onto the open pool and the water games during the Maiumas festival.

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[138] The theatre was surveyed and partially excavated during the 1930s, but no further investigations were carried out since then; see Schumacher, 1902, pp. 165-171, figs. 39-42; McGown, pp. 159-167, pls. XXXIIb-XXXVa.

[139] Welles, inscr. 279, pp. 470-471. The inscription can be dated with certainty to the year 535 CE, which means that the Maiumas festivities were still being held there in the 6th century. The theatre's location near the large pool and the connection of the Maiumas festival with water and theatre led Jones to conclude that the theatre at Birketein was erected especially for celebration of the Maiumas festival; Jones, 1973, vol. 2, p. 1021, note 76.

[140] See above, Introduction, note 33.

19. Gerasa: The North Theatre

The north theatre, so designated by the excavators of Gerasa because it is located in the northern part of the city, and also in order to distinguish it from the south theatre,[141] lies to the south of the city's northern decumanus and 70 m. west of the cardo maximus. Unlike the south theatre, the north theatre is incorporated in the city's street network in a most appropriate manner (see figs. 89-95),[142] to the extent even that across the northern decumanus we find a plaza which in effect is the extension of the theatre's postscaenium (see figs. 90-93).

Excavation of the north theatre was only begun in 1982 and has not yet been completed. The following is based upon the interim reports published in recent years.[143]

A tetrapylon marked the intersection of the cardo maximus and the northern decumanus which led off to the west (see fig. 93).[144] From the entrance to the northern decumanus the theatre would be immediately visible because of its tall stage building (see fig. 90). A 14-m. wide staircase led from the street level to a paved rectangular plaza bounded on its three other sides by decorative walls (see fig. 90). The staircase was bounded on both sides by raised antae whose facades contained semicircular niches. At the head of the staircase, set between two pilasters in the postscaenium walls, stood a portico of four columns bearing Corinthian capitals. The north theatre at Gerasa is the only theatre in our area with such lavish architectural design.

The colonnade along the northern decumanus, opposite the staircase, was interrupted so as to allow an unobstructed view of a portico which was as wide as the postscaenum and whose six columns were twice as high as the columns of the street's colonnade, i.e., 12 m. Through this impressive portico on the north side of the decumanus one passed into another public plaza whose exact shape we do not as yet know (see figs. 86, 90).[145]

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[141] The large expedition that dug at the city in the 1930s did not excavate the north theatre and only described it in general terms. Schumacher also has a description of the theatre and even drew a schematic plan (see fig. 89); see Schumacher, 1902, pp. 141-145, figs. 13-17. Clean-up and preservation activities took place there in the 1920s; see Horsfield; Fisher, pp. 22-23, pl. IIc.

[142] Segal, pp. 24, 31-35.

[143] Clark, Bowsher and Stewart, pp. 205-270, pls. I-XXXII.

[144] Ball et al., pp. 351-409.

[145] This plaza is very evident in the area, especially in the aerial photos. M.

The north theatre, which faces to the north, was built on a level area, whereby the ima cavea was dug out while the summa cavea rests on an artificial substructure (see figs. 86, 91, 92). Five scalaria divide the ima cavea into four cunei. The ima cavea had fourteen rows of seats, the summa cavea only eight, the latter divided by nine scalaria into ten cunei (see fig. 90).

The artificial substructure of the summa cavea is supported by two semicircular walls which enclosed a barrel-vaulted ambulacrum that one entered through eight vomitoria arranged radially. Light entered the ambulacrum from the entrances themselves and also through a number of windows that were set in the upper part of the theatre's exterior circumferential wall.

Through five barrel-vaulted vomitoria, set radially in the inner wall of the ambulacrum, one arrived not at a praecinctio but directly at the top row of seats of the ima cavea. Instead of the praecinctio there was a 1.80 m. high wall, built with great care and ornamented with semicircular niches (see below).

The orchestra has not yet been excavated, though we do know that it was semicircular (8.5 m. in diameter) and paved with stone slabs.

The stage building was built of two solid parallel walls which had a space of 2.51 m. between them. Even though the scaenae frons is in a poor state of preservation, remains of the three entrances, valvae regiae and hospitalia, are clearly visible. A continuous series of podia carried columns that bore an entablature decorating the facade of the scaenae frons. The stage itself was made of wooden slabs laid out over the hyposcaenium. Since excavation of this area is still going on, many details regarding the design and decoration of the front wall of the scaenae frons are as yet lacking.

One entered the orchestra via two large barrel-vaulted aditus maximi, while parallel running itinera versurarum led from the versurae directly to the pulpitum (see figs. 88, 90).

Though here, too, excavation has as yet to be completed, the theatre's excavators have already been able to show two clear stages in the north theatre's existence.[146]

In the first stage, only the lower cavea existed, its upper section

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Rostovtzeff already in the 1930s suggested that the plaza be seen as the city's agora (the "forum", as he called it) of Gerasa; see Rostovtzeff, p. 82. See also Segal, p. 34, fig. 43.

[146] Clark, Bowsher and Stewart, pp. 227-229.

enclosed by a decorative wall with five entrances (see fig. 91). A relatively small theatre, it was erected, according to an inscription, in 165 CE. In this inscription, which was found already by the expedition digging in Gerasa in the 1930s and which mentions Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, as well as the governor of Provincia Arabia, Quintus Antistius Adventus, the theatre is called an odeion. It could hold eight hundred spectators at the most.[147] It is even possible that at this stage the structure may have served as the city's council chamber (bouleuterion) since some of its seats were found with the names of the *phylai* (the "electoral districts") of Gerasa carved into them.[148]

The second stage in the structure's history can also be accurately dated, i.e., to the days of the reign of Emperor Severus Alexander (222-235), thanks to an inscription discovered at the site in 1982, which mentions the Emperor's mother, Julia Mammaea, and the governor of Provincia Arabia, Egnatius Victor Marianus.[149] At this stage, the summa cavea was added (see fig. 92). The stage building also seems to have undergone far-reaching changes. Originally no more apparently than a plain decorative wall, it was replaced by a 16 m. high stage building whose scaenae frons was rich in architectural and sculptural ornamentation.

These changes may also explain the above-mentioned absence of a praecinctio. The addition of an upper seat arrangement forced the theatre's builders to set the bottom row of seats of the summa cavea directly on the existing wall that closed off the ima cavea, which simply left no room for the usual praecinctio.

The north theatre at Gerasa is the only theatre in our area where it was possible to clearly discern two stages of building and, what is more, to date them precisely.

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[147] See Welles, p. 65. During the 1982 excavations, another inscription was found, as yet unpublished, that confirmed the theatre's dedication in 228 according to the dating at Gerasa, i.e., in 165/6 CE. No evidence has been uncovered as yet to show whether or not the theatre was roofed, i.e., the "odeion" designation may have been intended to suggest the theatre's small dimensions, in contrast to the south theatre. On the distinction between "theatre" and "odeion", see below, note 187. See also Clark, Bowsher and Stewart, p. 229.

[148] Ibid., p. 229; see also the names of the *phylai* that were discovered in the theatre at Neapolis (Shechem), below, p. 80.

[149] Clark, Bowsher and Stewart, p. 229; cf. also Welles, p. 406.

20. Gerasa: The South Theatre

The south theatre, in the southern part of Gerasa, was built on the northwest slope of the hill on which the Sanctuary of Zeus is located (see figs. 94, 95).[150] The theatre is well-preserved and has undergone extensive preservation and reconstruction activities which started in the 1920s and carried on into the 1970s, but it has not yet been thoroughly investigated and its exact plan has never been drawn (see figs. 101-103).[151]

The theatre's cavea faces north and consists of two horizontal sections: the ima cavea has fourteen rows of seats divided by five scalaria into four cunei, whereas the summa cavea's seventeen rows of seats are divided into eight cunei by nine scalaria (see fig. 103). The two sections were separated by a praecinctio unto which six vomitoria gave direct access from outside the theatre. The ima cavea was set on the natural slope of the sanctuary's hill. The bottom part of the summa cavea was also set on the natural slope whereas its upper part rested on an artificial incline of compact fill, supported by two semicircular walls which enclosed a barrel-vaulted ambulacrum. There were six rather sharply inclined barrel-vaulted vomitoria, arranged radially and symmetrically (see figs. 96, 97, 103), leading from the exterior circumferential wall of the theatre to the praecinctio. They guaranteed easy access from the sanctuary of Zeus directly to the cavea of the theatre.[152] The construction of the vomitoria warrants special notice. Because of the considerable angle of the incline roofing the vomitoria would have required sloping barrel vaults, a system of construction either too complicated or perhaps even unknown to the builders

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[150] Segal, pp. 23, 31-35.

[151] The activities of cleaning up and restoring the south theatre were started during the 1920s, and only completed in the early 1970s, after which excavations were begun. The restoration activities are conducted by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities; no report has as yet been published. See Austen and Harrison, p. 98, pls. I-II (see here, fig. 103). Though only based upon a survey, the plan published by the British investigators is actually the most precise we have. Another plan, somewhat less precise, was published by Fichter; see Fichter, p. 96 (see here, fig. 102). Cf. also Schumacher's schematic plan (here, fig. 101), Schumacher, 1902, p. 143, fig. 14.

[152] With its three theatres, Gerasa provides a good example of the variety of possibilities for locating theatres. The south theatre is located at a sanctuary within the city area, the north theatre was an integral part of the city's street network but had no clear connection to any sanctuary whereas the theatre at Birketein is located in a sanctuary 1,500 m. north of Gerasa where the Maiumas festival was held. See above, Architectural Analysis, pp. 19-20.

of the south theatre at Gerasa. Therefore, an alternative method was adopted, that of the graded barrel vault whereby instead of one continuous, sloping barrel vault, a series of graded arches was installed (see fig. 100).[153]

The theatre's semicircular orchestra (diameter 17 m.) was paved with meticulously arranged stone slabs and had a parapet.

Barrel-vaulted aditus maximi separate the cavea and the stage building, leading from outside the theatre directly to the orchestra. Parallel to these but leading from two wings of the stage building directly onto the stage are the two itinera versurarum (see figs. 99, 103).

The proscaenium, separating the orchestra and the pulpitum, is decorated with alternating rectangular and semicircular niches between which we find flat pilasters. Staircases at either side of the proscaenium provided easy ascent from the orchestra onto the pulpitum. The latter was made of wooden slabs that rested upon a series of arches set in the hyposcaenium.

The scaena's construction consisted of two parallel walls. Almost nothing has remained of the rear wall, whereas the scaenae frons did partially survive, which enabled reconstruction in recent years (see figs. 98, 99). Also partially preserved have been the two versurae structures that closed off the pulpitum at either side. The stage building facade originally rose to a height of two storeys, its three entrances, the valvae regiae and the two hospitalia, identical in size and design. Since as a rule the valvae regiae are higher and wider and, subsequently, also more extensively decorated than the side entrances, the set of entrances as found at Gerasa is quite rare and has very few parallels among the known Roman theatres.[154]

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[153] Sloping barrel vaults appear in our area as early as the 1st century BCE, for example in the Nabataean graves at Qasarweit; see Oren and Netzer. In the theatre at Caesarea, dated to the latter part of the 1st century BCE, extensive use was made of the sloping barrel vault, e.g., in the vomitoria and in the aditus maximi (see above, notes 119, 120). Thus, in the latter part of the 1st century CE, when the south theatre at Gerasa was built and the method of building with sloping vaults was well known in Hellenistic and Roman architecture, use continued to be made of stepped vaults; see, for example, the theatre at Bosra (2nd century CE); Finsen, pp. 18, 22.

[154] Compare, for example, the Roman theatres at Miletus and at Ephesus. The first has the typical arrangement of a central entrance which is higher and wider than the two side entrances, whereas at Ephesus we find five entrances all of equal design; see Bieber, pp. 218-219, figs. 733-736, 737-739.

Thanks to an epigraphic find the south theatre at Gerasa can be dated with confidence to the last decade of the 1st century CE, the period of Domitian's reign.[155]

21. Samaria (Sebaste)

Taking its cue from a natural depression, reminiscent of the characteristic shape of a theatre, the Harvard University team that excavated in Samaria at the beginning of this century fixed the site of the theatre in the northwest part of the city, near the wall.[156] About thirty years later, on the basis of a study of aerial photographs, it was located on the northeastern side of the city's acropolis. The theatre extends to the foot of the acropolis, with its cavea facing northward (see figs. 104, 105).[157] Only partially uncovered during the 1930s, the theatre's excavation was completed by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities in the early 1960s (see fig. 108).[158]

Compared to the other theatres of the area the theatre at Sebaste was built in an unusual manner dictated, it would seem, by its unique location. Part of its cavea was set upon segments of existing ancient walls. In the area between the northern wall of the Israelite acropolis and the orchestra landfill containing Iron Age building debris was piled up and compressed. For the bottom section of the cavea the bedrock was hewn out in terrace form which served as the foundation for the seats. Thus, it seems no use was made of barrel vaults to support the cavea.

The theatre's general diameter was about 48 m. and its width, when measuring the pulpitum, about 65 m. The cavea had a diameter of about 22 m.

The cavea's two horizontal segments were divided by a praecinctio. The ima cavea , with fourteen rows of seats, was divided by six scalaria into seven cunei, as was the summa cavea. Since virtu-

[155] Welles, pp. 398-399; Pouilloux, 1977, pp. 246-254, pl. 44; idem, 1979, pp. 2786-278, pl. 37.

[156] Reisner, Fisher and Lyon, 1924, vol. 1 (text), p. 167, vol. 2, pl. 1; the location of the theatre was determined by "the configuration of the area's surface" and "segments of buildings that were seen on the surface".

[157] Crowfoot et al., pp. 57-62, figs. 24-28, pls. LVI-LXI(1).

[158] Zayadine, 1966, pp. 576-580, fig. 3. The following is based on this report and the accompanying schematic plan which is at present the only documentation available.

ally the entire upper part of the summa cavea has been destroyed, it is impossible to know how it was designed (see fig. 108).[159]

The orchestra (diameter: 15 m.), paved with meticulously arranged rectangular stone slabs, extended somewhat beyond the cavea into a rectangular semicircle toward the pulpitum (see figs. 107-108).

The theatre's scaena was built on fill piled upon on the natural slope and supported by a wall on the north, but all of this has been swept away and only a few remains of the proscaenium have survived. The latter's design was quite routine: a series of alternating semicircular and rectangular niches (see fig. 106).

At the theatre itself and in its vicinity a fair number of architectural items were uncovered which show that the scaenae frons had been decorated with a wealth of architectural decoration, part of which was of marble.[160] Basing themselves upon analyses of the architectural, numismatic, and ceramic findings, and of the theatre's typology as compared with especially North African Roman theatres, the excavators of Samaria have dated the theatre to the last quarter of the 2nd century CE.[161]

Situated at Sebaste's highest point, near the city's acropolis, with only the city's main sanctuary, the temple in honour of Augustus, rising above it, the theatre's builders seem to have chosen the location with great care, exploiting the natural conditions of the site as well as the remains of ancient building for the theatre's cavea and thus saving themselves the considerable efforts erecting a system of artificial slopes would have required. The city's plan shows that the theatre was located midway between the main sanctuary and the forum (see figs. 104-105).

22. *Neapolis (Shechem/Nablus)*

The theatre at Neapolis was discovered accidentally in 1979 during construction activities in the city of Shechem (Nablus), and was excavated in the early 1980s by Y. Magen.[162] The Madaba map contained a hint of the theatre's existence.[163]

The theatre is suitably located at the foot of the northern slopes

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159 For the same reason it is impossible to estimate the number of rows of seats in the summa cavea.

160 Crowfoot et al., pp. 60-61, figs. 25-28, pls. LVI(2); LIX(1).

161 Ibid., p. 61.

162 Magen.

163 Abel, pp. 120-132, pls. III-IV; Avi-Yonah, 1953, pp. 129-156 (on Shechem/

of Mt. Gerizim in the northern part of the city and close to a stone quarry, which surely must have made its construction easier.

Excavation of the theatre has been completed except for its scaena which is still covered by later buildings. The theatre has not been well preserved because many of its stones were plundered during the Middle Ages and the modern period (see fig. 109).

The theatre faces north. The cavea is hewn into the slope of the mountain and is bounded by a solid semicircular wall which has its foundation in a ditch entirely hewn out of the mountain. Between this wall and the slope of the mountain an empty space was left out in order to allow people entrance to the theatre from this side as well: in the western segment of the wall which the excavations uncovered, three vaulted vomitoria were found. Though the eastern side of the wall has not been preserved, possibly three similar passageways may be reconstructed (see fig. 110).

Nothing has remained of the upper section of the summa cavea, but the theatre's excavator believes that the seats in this section were set not directly upon the bedrock but upon sloping barrel vaults built perpendicular to the circumferential wall.[164] Between the summa and ima caveae there ran a paved praecinctio, 3 m. wide (see fig. 110).

The ima cavea, much better preserved than the summa cavea and entirely hewn out of the bedrock, was divided into six cunei by seven scalaria. Its diameter was 11 m. and it had fourteen rows of seats, as against the summa cavea whose diameter was 18 m. and in which about twenty rows of seats can be reconstructed. The seats themselves were not set directly upon the bedrock but on a base of small stones and bonding material.

A circumferential passage very carefully paved with stone slabs ran along the bottom row of seats of the ima cavea. Between this passage and the orchestra there were a kind of parapet, 1.10 m. high, and three bisellia where distinguished guests were seated (see fig. 113). The semicircular orchestra, with a diameter of

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Neapolis, see folio 6, p. 143). At the time Avi-Yonah accepted Abel's identification which suggests that the semicircular building at the edge of the city is a nymphaeum and not a theatre.

[164] Magen, p. 272 (see here, fig. 110); this, however, remains conjecture—it may very well be that the theatre's entire summa cavea was set upon the natural slope which did not need the construction of barrel vaults to support the summa cavea.

26 m., was paved with slabs of green, white, and gray marble. The orchestra was reached through two vaulted aditus maximi, built as usual between the ends of the auditorium and the stage building. Part of the western aditus maximus has been preserved.

The theatre's scaena is still covered by later buildings, but architectural items that were found scattered about confirm that its architectural decoration was very rich, as was often the case with theatres in the area. Reliefs and three-dimensional statues that have been excavated here hint at a rather high level of artistic execution.[165]

Among the inscriptions unearthed at the theatre, as at the north theatre of Gerasa, the names are found of the patriarchal families/tribes of the city of Neapolis, the phylai (see fig. 112).[166]

The excavator's dating of the building to the first half of the 2nd century CE is based upon numismatic, ceramic, and epigraphic finds, as well as upon a typological analysis of the architectural items.[167] It seems that the theatre continued to function throughout the Byzantine period with changes made in the orchestra to adapt it to water games.[168]

The theatre at Neapolis stood out because of its excellent construction and the nature of its architectural decoration, and even with its stage building as yet uncovered, the excavator rightly claims that it belongs to the larger and more magnificent theatres built in the region (see fig. 111).[169]

The houses of modern Nablus prevent a reconstruction of the theatre's contemporary urban surroundings and of the spatial relationship between the theatre and the city's centre. Similarly, it is as yet impossible to know whether, as is suggested by the Madaba map, a colonnaded street ran from the centre of Neapolis towards the theatre.[170]

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[165] Magen, p. 274.

[166] Ibid., p. 275; for the north theatre at Gerasa, see Clark, Bowsher and Stewart, pp. 205-270, pls. I-XXXII, especially p. 229, and above, note 148.

[167] Magen, p. 277.

[168] Ibid., p. 276.

[169] According to a cautious estimate, the theatre at Shechem had about thirty-four rows of seats. The general diameter of the theatre was about 75 m., i.e., slightly smaller than the Beth-Shean theatre whose diameter was about 85 m. It seems plausible that the theatre at Shechem could hold a similar number of spectators as the Beth Shean theatre, i.e., about six thousand; Magen (p. 277) estimates the theatre's capacity at seven thousand.

[170] See notes 162-163.

23. Antipatris

The small theatre recently unearthed at Aphek-Antipatris is located on the southern part of the ancient tell on which Roman Antipatris was built.[171] The theatre faces east, with its stage building parallel to the southern part of the cardo which traverses the city from north to south. Because of its small dimension the excavators of Antipatris have called it an odeion.[172] Since in their opinion it was never completed,[173] and because of its poor state of preservation, a full plan of the theatre cannot be reconstructed nor is it possible to ascertain what construction systems were used.

Of the scaena almost nothing has remained. On the other hand, the space underneath the pulpitum (the hyposcaenium) has been well preserved. It is made of three parallel walls perpendicular to the front of the stage that form two corridors joined by ten arches arranged in pairs (see figs. 116-117).

The semicircular orchestra (with a diameter of about 10 m.) was paved with carefully placed large stone slabs (see fig. 114). The two aditus maximi are paved with similar large stone slabs which led to it from the outside, and were originally barrel-vaulted; from the theatre they gave access to the nearby cardo.

The cavea was divided by three scalaria into four cunei, but since only the bottom two rows of seats have remained, it is impossible to know how many rows of seats there were originally or how the slope that carried the cavea was created.[174]

A number of architectural items unearthed during the excavation of the theatre seem to belong to the scaenae frons whose construction was never completed,[175] and confirm its rich architectural ornamentation.

The excavators date the theatre to between the first quarter of the 3rd and the second half of the 4th century CE. The city of Antipatris was totally destroyed by an earthquake in 363 CE. Since the theatre had not been completed by that date, it is possible

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[171] Kochavi, pp. 103-109, figs. 89-94.

[172] According to Kochavi, the theatre at Antipatris is small in comparison to the other theatres unearthed in our region. It does not seem to have been roofed, which would preclude terming it an odeion; see also Bieber, pp. 220-222, and below note 187.

[173] Kochavi, pp. 103-104.

[174] Ibid., pp. 103-104, fig. 89.

[175] Ibid., pp. 92, 94.

that building had started not much earlier, i.e., during the short reign of Julian the Apostate, who admired classical culture and vigorously fought Christianity which was then gaining control of the Roman Empire. Julian was killed in battle in the same year (363 CE) that the deadly earthquake destroyed not only the theatre but the entire city.[176]

The Antipatris theatre was located in the southern part of the city, near the cardo, the city's main thoroughfare, because, unlike the northern part of Antipatris where building was rather dense, it was sparsely settled and contained a lot of space for public buildings such as the theatre. The distance between the city's forum and the theatre was about 480 m. The easy access from the cardo confirms that the theatre's location from the outset formed part of the city plan of Antipatris.

24. *Philadelphia (Amman): The Large Theatre*

The large theatre at Philadelphia is located on the northern slope of a hill that faces the acropolis, at a point where the valley is broadest (see fig. 118).[177] Together with the agora and a concentration of main public buildings, the site also contained a second, small theatre, located immediately to the east of the large theatre.[178] The theatre's cavea faces north and consists of three horizontal segments (ima, media and summa caveae). Though it seems to be resting entirely upon the natural slope, actually only its central section is hewn out of it while the lateral sections of the media and summa cavea are built with supporting walls and circumferential barrel vaults. The ima cavea has thirteen rows of seats divided by eight scalaria into seven cunei. While the entire

[176] Ibid., p 109. Since we know of no other theatre in our area erected after the middle of the 3rd century, the date suggested by Kochavi is late and seems to us somewhat problematic. The fact that the theatre was unfinished in 363 when the entire city was destroyed, does not necessarily mean that its construction was begun near that date; for a more precise dating of the theatre other considerations such as ceramic, numismatic, or typological, should be taken into account as well. On Julian the Apostate, see Bowersock, 1978; Lieu.

[177] Segal, pp. 9-11.

[178] Though various scholars have surveyed the two theatres at Philadelphia, the plan presented by Butler is still the most exact (see fig. 121). It was corrected and updated by Fakharani (see below, note 217), see fig. 122. Cf. Conder and Kitchener, 1889, pp. 35-36; Brünnow and v. Domaszewski, vol. 2, fig. 841; Butler, 1907, pp. 31-33, fig. 8, pl. IV. (On the small theatre at Philadelphia, see below.)

ima cavea is hewn from the natural slope (see figs. 119, 120, 123), the seats, as for example in the large theatre at Petra, are built of stone.[179]

A circumferential wall with two vomitoria at both its eastern and western ends bounds the praecinctio which separates the ima cavea from the media cavea (see figs. 122, 123). The vomitoria allowed passage from outside the theatre directly onto the praecinctio. The media cavea had sixteen rows of seats divided into seven cunei by eight scalaria (see figs. 121, 122).

A second praecinctio separated the media and summa cavea, with three vomitoria at either side (see fig. 122).

The sixteen rows of the summa cavea were also divided by eight scalaria into seven cunei. There is a porticus behind the uppermost row of the summa cavea bounded by a circumferential wall, which at its centre had a rectangular entrance decorated with elegant profiles that gave access to a square exedra. Semicircular niches on either side of the entrance were covered by half domes bearing conch-like decoration. The exedra was barrel-vaulted.[180]

The circumferential wall of the porticus, which closed the cavea side of the theatre, had entrances only at its eastern and western ends where broad stone stairs made it possible for theatre-goers coming from the direction of the agora to reach the edges of the cavea from the outside (see fig. 122).[181] These stairs were identical in design, each containing five flights separated by four broad landings, which made for a comfortable, moderate climb up the rather steep slope. From the stairs one could furthermore enter the vomitoria under both the media and the summa cavea (see fig. 122).[182]

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[179] On the large theatre at Petra, see below, pp. 91-93. Hammond, 1964, pp. 59-66; idem, 1965.

[180] This building may be seen as a sort of "cavea shrine". Buildings such as these were discovered, among other places, also at the theatres of Timgad, the Pompey theatre at Rome, and the theatre at Nicopolis in Asia Minor, see Hanson, pp. 59-77.

[181] Butler and other surveyors failed to discover these two staircases on each side of the cavea, and only in the 1960s during activities to preserve the theatre and the agora at its foot were they uncovered. In the theatre plan offered by Fakharani, the two staircases clearly appear; see Tell, and el-Fakharani.

[182] The "stepped street" that was recently unearthed, encircling the eastern part of the Beth-Shean theatre (see *HA* 93, pp. 47-50, fig. 47), is not similar to the two staircases unearthed at the large theatre at Philadelphia. At the large Beth-Shean theatre, whose summa cavea was built of a circumferential vault with intersecting radial vaults, it was possible to enter the theatre via many vomitoria (see

The two barrel-vaulted aditus maximi led to the stone-paved semicircular orchestra (diameter 18 m.). The proscaenium was decorated with alternating semicircular and rectangular niches (see fig. 124).

The theatre's scaena was built of two parallel walls: the scaenae frons facing the pulpitum was the thicker of the two and contained the valvae regiae, which was set in a large semicircular niche with at each side two smaller semicircular ones, and further to each side the hospitalia. The pulpitum was made of wooden beams which covered the hyposcaenium.

The versurae set off the rectangular pulpitum on either side of the scaena. Barrel-vaulted itinera versurarum led from the versurae to the scaena. However, the very poor state of preservation of the entire stage building makes any more or less precise reconstruction impossible.

A portico which ran parallel to the stage building's northern wall formed part of the colonnade that squared off the remaining three sides of Philadelphia's agora (see figs. 118, 123).[183] This colonnade served to somewhat soften the austere look of the unadorned, solid high exterior wall of the stage building.[184]

The large theatre at Philadelphia together with the small theatre and the agora formed an impressive urban complex in the centre of the city. The large theatre closed off the city from the south, balancing the acropolis and its complex of ritual worship buildings across the valley (see figs. 118, 123).[185]

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above, pp. 56-60). At Philadelphia, on the other hand, most of the cavea was hewn in the slope, and vomitoria are found only in the constructed ends and along its entire periphery. Thus, the two staircases built at the two sides of the cavea enabled the audience to enter the theatre other than via the two aditus maximi to the orchestra and from there by means of the scalaria to the cavea.

[183] Segal, pp. 9-11.

[184] Of how the stage buildings may have appeared from the outside one can get an idea by looking at those theatres in which these walls have survived in their original height, for example, at Orange, at Aspendos, or at Aosta; about the theatre at Orange (Arausio), see Bieber, p. 201, figs. 675-679; ibid., pp. 208-209, figs. 700-706 (on the theatre at Aspendos); on the theatre at Aosta, see Crema, pp. 191, 196, figs. 197-198.

[185] This arrangement—of two theatres or a theatre and an odeion near one another, located near a public plaza, agora, or forum, forming a defined urban complex—is rather widespread throughout the cities of the Roman Empire, both in the western and eastern provinces. The following examples may serve to illustrate this;—a. Pompeii, Italy: Modona, pp. 88-96, fig. 48;—b. Orange (Arausio), France: Bieber, p. 201, figs. 678-679;—c. Corinth, Greece: Bronner. The example of Corinth is especially interesting, since its complex urban landscape was the result of an urban process that extended over many years. The Hellenistic

On the basis of epigraphic finds and architectural-typological considerations, the large theatre can be dated with confidence to the reign of the Antonine dynasty.[186]

25. *Philadelphia (Amman): The Small Theatre*

The small theatre in Philadelphia is located to the east of the large theatre, facing westward toward the agora that stretches out in front of the large theatre (see figs. 118, 119).[187]

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theatre was built near Corinth's agora in the Roman period. The theatre also underwent many changes during the years of its existence, from its first Hellenistic form till the transformation of its orchestra into an arena in the Roman period. The odeion was erected to the south, near the theatre. Its beginnings lie in the 1st century CE and its final form dates from the days of the Antonine dynasty. The two buildings form a single compound and, although near the agora/forum, do not create an integrated complex with it, unlike the large and small theatres at Philadelphia; see Stillwell, especially plate I, which clearly shows the location of the theatre and the odeion in the urban complex of Corinth.

[186] Frezouls, 1961, p. 225; Zayadine, 1969, pp. 34-35, pl. XXII; Schlumberger, fig. 73; Hadidi, 1989.

[187] Butler calls the small theatre at Philadelphia an "odeum", so as to distinguish it from the large theatre nearby. The distinction between theatre and odeum/odeion is as unclear among ancient authors as it is in modern research. As in this instance, it often happens that a theatre is called an odeion merely because of its small dimensions, whereby the underlying assumption is that an odeion is simply a small theatre that served for more intimate events, such as concerts and poetry readings with musical accompaniment. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford 1971, p. 746) defines the odeion as a "small theatre" or a "roofed hall" that served for musical competitions. However, since an odeion's main characteristic is that it is roofed, it should be defined rather as "a roofed building resembling a small theatre", i.e., for a building to be called an odeion (Gr.) or an odeum (L.), it must have the appearance of a small theatre and be roofed.

The oldest structure called an "odeion" that we know of is the odeion of Pericles erected at the foot of the Acropolis near the theatre of Dionysos. But neither did it resemble a theatre nor was it small. It was a rectangular building (68 × 64 m.) whose roof was supported by a forest of columns, with against its four walls a number of benches, and the one characteristic it shared with an odeion was that it was a roofed, public hall; see Travlos, "Odeion of Pericles", pp. 387-391. During the Roman period, two more odeion buildings were erected in Athens: the odeion of M. Agrippa and that of Herodes Atticus. The odeion of M. Agrippa was erected in the centre of the Athenian Agora in the year 15 BCE. Unlike the Pericles building, it did resemble a small theatre and had a double-sloped roof; see Travlos, pp. 365-377. Of the odeion of Herodes Atticus, also placed at the foot of the Acropolis, west of the odeion of Pericles, two literary sources (Philostratus and Pausanius, see below) confirm that it was erected in about 175 CE by Herodes Atticus in memory of his wife, Regilla, who had died in 160 CE. Both sources particularly praise the roof which was made of cedar beams which could cover a relatively large space (28 × 38 m.); see Travlos, pp. 378-386 ("Odeion of Herodes Atticus").

Unlike the large theatre, the small theatre was built on a level area, with its cavea resting on an artificial landfill contained within and supported by a solid semicircular wall (see figs. 124, 127). Through three barrel-vaulted vomitoria one reached the praecinctio,[188] which divided the cavea into an ima cavea and summa

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It seems, however, that the earliest odeion we know of today was built not in Greece, but in Italy, i.e., the odeum of Pompeii erected near the theatre in 75 BCE. The inscription discovered in it speaks of a *theatrum tectum*, i.e. a "roofed theatre", an alternative definition of odeum. Bieber (pp. 220-222) believes that the odeum is actually a Roman building that evolved from a Hellenistic building similar, e.g., to the bouleuteria of Miletus or Priene. Remarkably enough, Vitruvius, who serves as an important source of information on almost everything connected with Greek and Roman architecture, does not mention the odeum concept, despite substantial chapters on Greek and Roman theatres; see Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, V, 3-9. Odea were scarce in Italy. In Rome itself, e.g., only one odeum is mentioned, viz., the one built, according to Suetonius, by Domitian (see Suetonius, *Twelve Caesars* [Domitian, 5], Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1957).

Ancient authors mentioned only isolated odeia as, for example, the one at Corinth mentioned both by Pausanius in *Description of Greece* (Pausanius II, 3, 6) and Philostratus (Philostratus, *Vitae Sophistarum* II, 2, 551). The Corinth odeion in Pausanius' opinion, is second in splendour only to the odeion at Athens. Philostratus, again, calls the building in Corinth "a roofed theatre" and not an "odeion".

The odeion at Corinth, built in the 1st century CE and its design that of a small Roman theatre, was largely refurbished in the 2nd century when its stone walls were all covered with marble slabs. Philostratus claims that it was Herodes Atticus who built (*recte* restored) the odeion; see Bronner, pp. 1-3, 142-148. In North Africa, an odeion was unearthed at Ptolemais in Cyrenaica, see C.H. Kraeling, 1962, "The Odeum", pp. 89-93. pl. XIIA, B, plan XI; see also here, fig. 152.

When we come to our region we find that actually none of the thirty theatres that we know of today can be defined without doubt as an odeion. Literary sources mention an odeum at Caesarea built after the Great Revolt and replacing one of the city's synagogues that had been destroyed (see Malalas, p. 261; see also Levine, 1975b, pp. 25-26) but so far it has not been located. Even the epigraphic finds prove of but little help. In an inscription discovered at the Kanawat theatre the building is called an "odeion in the shape of a theatre" or "theatre-like" (*theatroeidas odeion*) (Waddington 2341), and we have no way of knowing whether the Kanawat theatre was roofed. The same goes for the other small-dimensioned theatres excavated in our region, e.g., at Beth-Shean (see fig. 59), Antipatris (see fig. 114), or Pella (see fig. 66), or the small theatres unearthed at Nabataean sites—Sahr (see fig. 2), Petra (the small theatre, see fig. 143), Wadi Sabra (see fig. 147), or Elusa (see fig. 131). More likely in spite of their dimensions, they must be seen as theatres and not odeia.

[188] The small theatre is set together with the large theatre by many surveyors, but it has not in fact been excavated to this day. Being entirely built on level ground like the large theatre, it was almost entirely dismantled and very little of it has remained in the area. The restoration and partial reconstruction of the small theatre has recently been begun; see Conder, pp. 36-37; Butler, 1907, pp. 50-54, figs. 34-35.

cavea, the latter divided by six radial scalaria into seven cunei, the former by five scalaria into four cunei (see fig. 127). Here, too, a porticus extended behind the uppermost row of seats in the summa cavea, bounded by a wall.

Two barrel-vaulted aditus maximi led underneath the ima cavea directly from the outside into the orchestra (12 m. in diameter). About 4 m. wide, they ran between the ends of the cavea and the versurae (see figs. 127, 128).

The stage itself was long and narrow (24 x 3 m.) (see figs. 127, 128). The scaena was built of two solid walls, the scaenae frons containing the usual three entrances, i.e., valvae regiae and hospitalia, all of the same width, while the second wall, the western one and the theatre's outside wall, had five entrances, with between them semicircular niches, which gave access to the scaena and the versurae and, via these, to the aditus maximi and the orchestra (see fig. 127).

Parallel to the exterior wall of the scaena stretched the agora's portico. Obviously the location of the large and small theatres was carefully considered since the topography was difficult and left little room for manoeuvering. As mentioned above, the two theatres, the agora and its portico together with the colonnaded street closing off the agora to the north must have created an impressive urban compound.[189]

Like the large theatre, the small theatre is dated to the days of the Antonine dynasty.[190]

26. Jericho

In the mid-1970s, at Tel Samarat, about 600 m. south of Tel el-Sultan, E. Netzer excavated a unique complex which contained a theatre, a hippodrome, and a third building, near the theatre, which may have been a gymnasion.[191]

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[189] Segal, pp. 9-11.

[190] The dating of the small theatre at Philadelphia has not been conclusively determined. Since the theatre has not been excavated and no inscriptions have been found, its dating is based upon typological and artistic considerations of the architectural fragments. According to Frezouls, the theatre was built in the latter part of the 2nd century CE; see Frezouls, 1961, pp. 202-227. On the other hand, Hadidi, on the basis of similar considerations, arrives at a much earlier date, i.e., the beginning of the 2nd century CE; see Hadidi, 1974. See also Zayadine, 1983, pp. 184-188.

[191] Tel Samarat, investigated preliminarily by Ch. Warren as early as 1883, was

The hippodrome consisted of a rectangular track (315 × 83 m.) which was surrounded by a brick wall 1.60 m. thick and set on a gravel base (see fig. 130).

The theatre, which is located parallel to the short, northern wall of the hippodrome, faces south. This at first seems surprising since in our area virtually all caveae face either north or northwest, but as the excavator of the site has pointed out, Jericho served as a winter resort—with its cavea facing southward, the theatre could offer spectators a welcome exposure to the rays of the winter sun.[192]

The theatre is badly preserved. All its stone seats and stairs have disappeared; only the foundation upon which the seats were placed has remained. Recognizable is furthermore a praecinctio, which separated the ima and summa caveae.

The theatre's cavea rested upon fill piled up and shaped into a semicircular incline supported and surrounded by a solid wall. While this wall has in great part survived, nothing has remained of the orchestra and stage building. It may even be that the absence of a stage building was deliberate, viz., the construction of the entire complex suggests that the cavea was intended to let people watch the chariot races in the hippodrome (see fig. 129). A third possibility is that what we have here is a dual-purpose installation whereby for theatrical events a wooden stage would be set up which was then again dismantled when chariot races were held in the hippodrome.

Behind the semicircular wall that closed off the cavea extended a large-sized building (70 × 70 m.). Its plan and manner of construction cannot be reconstructed with any precision because it is very poorly preserved, but it may have served as a gymnasion.[193]

Architectural and ceramic finds as well as historiographic evidence corroborate the dating of the complex to the days of Herod.[194] The incorporation of a theatre, hippodrome, and possibly a gymnasion as well into a single complex as erected by Herod in Jericho is a unique phenomenon in the architecture of the en-

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extensively excavated by E. Netzer in 1975-1976; see Netzer. Josephus Flavius mentions both the hippodrome and the theatre and/or the amphitheatre in connection with events that occurred in Jericho during King Herod's last days; see *Antiquities* 17, 193-194; Wars 1, 33. 8.

192 Netzer, p. 106.

193 Ibid., p. 105.

194 Ibid., pp. 106-107.

tertainment and sports world of the entire Hellenistic and Roman period.[195]

27. Elusa

The theatre at Elusa was found in 1973 by A. Negev who subsequently directed short excavation seasons in 1979 and 1980.[196] The full excavation of the theatre has not yet been completed.

The theatre is located upon the southeastern lowlands of Elusa and faces westward. Built of local stone, it is of but small dimensions: its diameter is only 28 m. and the width of the stage building (the scaena) 31.30 m. (see fig. 131).

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[195] In Hellenistic gymnasia as, e.g., at Miletus, Priene, Pergamon, and Delos, study halls, palestrae, bathing facilities and racetracks were incorporated in a single complex, and could form large and impressive installations, such as at Pergamon, for example. Imperial bathhouses built in the first centuries CE in Italy, North Africa, and especially in Asia Minor, brought together various activities for spiritual and physical development in a single installation, while one could also find incorporated in a single complex a study hall, library and a palestra, which served as both a race track-stadium and an expanse for calisthenics. There is only one other example of the actual incorporation of a theatre and a circus, i.e., at Pessinus, in Phrygia, Asia Minor; see Texier, vol. 1, table 62. The site today is almost completely destroyed, but at the beginning of the 19th century it was still possible to clearly make out the Roman theatre which had an auditorium set upon barrel vaults but whose shape was similar to that of the Hellenistic theatres. There is a stage building through which one could move from the theatre to the circus. The circus, parallel to the scaena wall, was about 345 m. long. See also Lindley Vann, p. 64, fig. 118.

There is a theatre and circus built close to one another at Orange (Arausio) in Provence, France, but they are not integrated as at Pessinus; see Bieber, p. 201, fig. 678.

Incorporation of amphitheatre and circus is equally rare. At Leptis Magna, in North Africa, a circus and amphitheatre were built near one another, and special paths joined the two installations and made for quick and easy communication between them; see Squarciapino, "Der Zirkus und das Amphitheater", pp. 129-132, fig. 22, pls. 94-96; Caffarelli and Caputo, "Outlying Monuments: the Circus and the Amphitheatre", p. 117, pls. 216-218.

Admittedly somewhat more widespread is the incorporation of theatre and stadium; see, for example, Sardis in Asia Minor: Lindley Vann, pp. 47-65. Better preserved even are the theatre and the stadium at Aizanoi, Phrygia, in Asia Minor; see Texier, vol. 1, pl. 23; Lindley Vann, fig. 117; Bieber, pp. 219-220, fig. 743, 744.

[196] Negev, 1982, pp. 122-128. In the winter of 1979 a joint team of the Hebrew University and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev included A. Segal and B. Johnson while the surveyor was P. Lupin. In the winter of 1980, a second season was conducted jointly by the Hebrew University and the University of Missouri. The team's surveyor was A. Chen. Professor A. Negev headed both teams.

The theatre was built on level ground and its cavea rested upon an artificial incline supported by two semicircular walls, the 3-m. space between them filled up with earth and gravel which successfully withstood the pressure exerted by the theatre's cavea (see fig. 132).[197] The two walls were built of rough-hewn local stone, with some cementing material and gravel between the large stones. The exterior wall was coated on the outside with a thick layer of plaster.

The theatre's cavea was semicircular in shape. The excavator found seven rows of seats in situ in the lower part of the cavea, and it seems that the theatre originally had another seven rows of seats (see fig. 131). The cavea, about 17.50 m. wide, was apparently not divided horizontally by a praecinctio as in most of the Roman theatres.[198] Three scalaria divided the cavea into four cunei. In the bottom section of the central cuneus, facing the centre of the stage building, a "box for honoured guests" was unearthed, a rectangular area of 2.90 x 2.80 m. carefully paved with local stone (see fig. 134).

The semicircular orchestra (diameter 11 m.) has only partially been excavated. It was paved with rectangular stone slabs and could be entered via two barrel-vaulted aditus maximi located between the ends of the cavea and the stage building.

The two aditus maximi of the Elusa theatre had an added function. Since vomitoria would have weakened the cavea's construction, entrances were made in the aditus maximi which gave onto stairways set in the space between the cavea's two walls and leading to the upper end of the cavea. From there, via the scalaria, the audience could easily reach their seats (see fig. 131).

The pulpitum has not yet been excavated. Of the scaena, partially excavated, only its general shape is known; its dimensions

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[197] The builders of the Elusa theatre apparently estimated that a single wall, strong as it might be would not long withstand the pressure of the mound of earth and the stone seats upon it, and the solution they adopted of two concentric walls with an earth fill between them indeed proved itself: when the theatre was excavated, the exterior circumferential wall still rose to a height of more than 3 m. A drawback of this system, of course, is that the cavea is sealed off from the outside and the seating area can be entered only through the theatre's two aditus maximi. Cf. also the theatres at Kanawat (above, pp. 43-44), Pella (above, pp. 61-64) and Sahr (above, pp. 38-39).

[198] Since in smaller theatres or odeia the number of rows of seats was small, there apparently was no need to divide the auditorium horizontally; see also, for example, the theatre at Sahr, above, pp. 38-39, or the theatre at Hammat-Gader (above, pp. 45-46).

were 31.30 × 2.85m. Very little has remained of the scaena frons, though the excavators were able to make out the valvae regiae and the northern hospitalium (see fig. 131).

The theatre at Elusa was apparently built in the first half of the 1st century CE, a dating which is based upon ceramic finds as well upon an analysis of some architectural items (primarily the Nabataean capitals) and a few artistic finds (fragments of statues).[199]

The theatre continued to function till the latter part of the Byzantine period: in an inscription discovered in the vicinity of the stage building and dated to 454 CE mention is made of the refurbishing of the "old theatre" pavement.[200] Only further excavations will show how the theatre was incorporated in the landscape of Nabataean and Roman Elusa. In the Byzantine period, a large church was built near the theatre.[201]

28. Petra: The Large Theatre

The Large Theatre at Petra is located 600 m. from the centre of the city. Set upon a natural slope above the riverbed of Wadi Mousa (see figs. 135, 139), the theatre's cavea and orchestra area were hewn out of the rock while the scaena and all of its appurtenances were constructed. The hyposcaenium and the two aditus maximi were partially hewn out and partially built. The theatre has been surveyed many times and was excavated completely during the 1960s.[202]

The theatre faces east. Its cavea consists of three horizontal sections of seats separated by two praecinctiones (see figs. 137-140).[203] The summa cavea had twelve rows of seats with a hewn-out circumferential area above them. The media cavea had twenty-three rows, while the ima cavea had ten rows of seats. The entire cavea was divided by five scalaria into six cunei.[204]

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[199] Negev, 1982, pp. 122-123.

[200] Negev, 1981, pp. 73-76, plot 74.

[201] Negev, 1982, pp. 125-128. *The large theatre*

[202] For a summary of the research of the large theatre of Petra, see Hammond, 1989, pp. 444-445; Hammond, 1965, pp. 6-7.

[203] Actually, the cavea was hewn out of the necropolis area, with many graves damaged in the process (see fig. 141).

[204] All told, there were about forty-rive rows of seats in the large theatre which could hold up to eight thousand spectators, according to the theatre's excavator. Even if this number may be somewhat exaggerated, no doubt the large theatre at Petra was among the largest in the entire area (its overall diameter: 69 meters).

The semicircular orchestra, hewn out from the rock, was 24.5 m. in diameter and coated with hard plaster. Of the two aditus maximi the southern one was mostly hewn and the rest built, whereas hewing out of the northern one was left unfinished (see fig. 142).[205] Above the southern aditus maximus the layout of a tribunal can be made out—the northern aditus maximus, had it been completed, would no doubt have featured a similar pattern (see figs. 136-138).

The stage building was built on a hewn-out foundation but most of it has been eroded by the waters of nearby Wadi Mousa. In the scaenae frons one can clearly discern the three characteristic entrances, with valvae regiae set in a curved niche and the two hospitalia in rectangular niches. Between these on rectangular podia stood columns bearing an entablature (see figs. 138-141). The pulpitum was raised 1.20 m. above the level of the orchestra, the proscaenium designed with alternating rectangular pilasters and rectangular niches and a semicircular niche at its centre. Staircases at the two ends of the proscaenium led from the orchestra level to the stage which was about 27 m. wide and about 6 m. deep (see figs. 140, 141) and paved with carefully placed stone slabs carried by the arches of the hyposcaenium.

The original stage building, though mostly destroyed now, consisted of two strong parallel walls with a space of about 2.80 m. between them (the total width of the building was about 7 m.). The walls, and especially the scaenae frons, were built of nicely hewn stone. The original stage building apparently rose to a height of two storeys.

The theatre was erected in the days of Aretas IV (9 BCE-40 CE), and during the 1st and 2nd centuries CE underwent a number of repairs and refurbishings.[206]

For a comparison of the data of the Petra, Philadelphia, and Beth-Shean theatres, see Table of Comparative Data, pp. 98-101.

[205] Since the theatre was almost entirely hewn out of the natural slope with, as a result, its cavea surrounded by high, inaccessible cliffs, it could be entered only from the Wadi Mousa direction, that is, through the orchestra, which meant that the traditional aditus maximi were in effect unusable and thus were hewn out only in imitation of other theatres.

[206] This dating was fixed by the theatre's excavator, who after he had re-turned and conducted further stratigraphical and typological investigations, concluded that the precise time-frame of the theatre's erection could be set between 4BCE-27CE; see Hammond, 1964, "Chronological Conclusion", pp. 55-71; McKenzie, pp. 35, 143-144.

29. Petra: The Small Theatre

The Small Theatre at Petra is found on the north bank of Wadi Mousa, at a distance of ca. 450 m. from the large theatre and 260 m. east of the nymphaeum. The colonnaded street whose pavement continued eastward to the nymphaeum, may possibly have reached the vicinity of the theatre (see fig. 135).

When the small theatre was reviewed by the German surveyors in 1917, little had remained of it except a section of the orchestra and sections of the walls that closed off the cavea on either side of the orchestra.[207] In the orchestra, whose diameter was 11 m., a number of paving slabs were located (see fig. 143). The theatre area is still covered with many construction stones, and no further research has been carried out since the 1917 survey.

It would seem that because of the natural slope at least part of the cavea could be rested on a suitable incline which did not require the construction of inclined barrel vaults. Two concentric walls, each about 2 m. thick and with a 2 m. space between them, encircle the orchestra (see fig. 143). As at Pella, this encircling corridor may have contained a barrel-vaulted ambulacrum though it could equally be that, as in the Nabataean theatre at Elusa, the two walls and the space between them formed the only support for the artificial landfill upon which the upper part of the cavea rested. Further excavation only can provide answers to questions such as these.[208] J. McKenzie, in a recent study of the water supply system for Petra in general and of that for the nearby nymphaeum in particular, has raised the possibility that part of the water of the channel that brought water to the nymphaeum was diverted by separate channels to the theatre.[209]

30. Wadi Sabra

The theatre at Wadi Sabra is part of a Nabataean sanctuary located 8 kms. south of Petra and has remained virtually uninvestigated. The first to survey the theatre site was the French

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207 Bachmann, Watzinger and Wiegand, "Das kleine Theater und seine Umgebung", pp. 32-33, figs. 25-26.

208 About the theatre at Pella, see above, pp. 61-64. About the Nabataean theatre at Elusa, see above, pp. 89-91, notes 196-201.

209 McKenzie, p. 110.

traveller L. de Laborde,[210] who reached Wadi Sabra in 1828 and whose survey also included the many building remains and a rather detailed map of the site (see fig. 144).[211] The few travellers and surveyors who visited Wadi Sabra since then have noted the remains of the temples, public buildings whose nature remains as yet unclear, and the theatre. Because of the shape of its orchestra some, with Laborde, have designated the theatre as a naumachia (see below).[212]

The theatre is completely hewn out of the stone in a deep valley at the foot of Jebel el-Yathum, slightly above the meandering riverbed of Wadi el-Yathum, its seats made of finely hewn stone set on the ten terraces that formed the cavea. The top row seats had a backrest (see figs. 145-146).[213]

Whereas its sides were destroyed mainly by erosion, the cavea's central section has been well preserved, and seems to have been divided by three scalaria into four cunei. The cavea in the Wadi Sabra theatre is remarkable in that, unlike the other theatres in our region, it extends beyond the orchestra's semicircle (see fig. 147). The orchestra's diameter is 19 m. and it lies 2.50 m. below the bottom row of seats.

This latter feature gained in importance when in the detailed 1980 survey conducted in the area of the theatre, a sophisticated system of channels, dams and reservoirs was discovered in the steep slope above the theatre, which may have been intended to gather run-off waters and direct the flow to the orchestra, confirming Laborde's claim that the Wadi Sabra theatre served as a naumachia. However, only a full excavation in the area of the orchestra, as yet unearthed, and a survey of the water supply system above the theatre, to determine whether they were connected, can clarify the exact function of the theatre. If indeed it served as

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[210] Laborde, pp. 195-197; Laborde termed the theatre a naumachia.

[211] Brünnow and v. Domaszewski, vol. 1, pp. 425-427, pl. XXI (see here, fig. 144). They were also the first to photograph the theatre; see ibid. p. 426, fig. 479.

[212] Kennedy, pp. 19-25; Krammerer, pp. 273, 328, 383, 384. The first scientific survey at Wadi Sabra was conducted in 1980 by M. Lindner, who besides measuring and investigating the theatre also investigated the water system which, he claims, was meant to divert run-off water to the theatre's orchestra. Lindner does, however, stress that only the full excavation of the theatre and in particular the orchestra area can determine whether the theatre indeed served as a naumachia; see Lindner, 1989, pp. 500-505; idem, 1986, pp. 146-149; idem, 1982, pp. 231-242; McKenzie, p. 110.

[213] Lindner, 1982, p. 235, fig. 3.

a naumachia, this will prompt a re-examination of the currently held view that among the Nabataeans theatres served as ritual gathering places only for the worshipping of the dead.[214]

[214] See above, general discussion on the theatres in the Nabataean area, Introduction, pp. 6-7; see also above, Analysis, pp. 16-19.

TABLE OF COMPARATIVE DATA

THE THEATRES IN ROMAN PALESTINE AND PROVINCIA ARABIA

	Site	Erected	Historical sources	Epigraphical source	Excavation	Survey	Description/ building method	Incorporation in landscape	General diameter	Orchestra diameter	Rows of seats	Estimated capacity
1.	SAHR	1st c. CE	–	–	–	X	Tiny theatre with no stage building. The cavea rests on an artificial slope supported by two concentric walls.	Close to the sanctuary with no connection to the city.	20	10.25	7	400
2.	PHILIPPOPOLIS	244-249 CE	X	–	X	–	Small theatre built of basalt. The ima cavea is dug into the natural slope whereas the summa cavea rests on an artificial fill supported by the two walls of a barrel-vaulted ambulacrum.	Located in the centre of the city near the agora but lacks any spatial connection with it.	35	8.50	18	1,200
3.	SEPPHORIS	1st. c. CE	–	–	X	–	Medium-size theatre. Most of the cavea is hewn out of the slope. The summa cavea rests on an artificial fill supported by the two walls of a barrel-vaulted ambulacrum. The orchestra is hewn out, the stage building is a solid wall.	Located on the northern slope of the acropolis.	47	14	34	4,000
4.	KANAWAT	2nd c. CE	–	X	–	X	Tiny theatre, mostly hewn out of rock. The cavea rests on a natural slope, only its edges and the stage building separately constructed.	Located in a deep valley near the city centre but cut off from the rest of the public buildings	25	6.90	9	800
5.	HAMMAT-GADER	2nd-3rd c. CE	–	–	X	–	Small theatre. The cavea rests on a natural slope, with the seats and the stage building built of basalt.	Located near the baths with a colonnaded street nearby.	35	13	15	1,000
6.	GADARA (North)	–	–	–	–	–	Large theatre built on the north slope of the acropolis. Most of the cavea rests on a natural slope except for the upper part of the summa cavea which rests on an artificial fill supported by circumferential supporting walls.	Located in the northern part of the acropolis. The decumanus maximus passes by the foot of the theatre and along its stage building.	61	–	–	–
7.	GADARA (West)	–	–	–	–		Small theatre built on the west slope of the acropolis. The ima cavea appears to rest on a natural slope while the summa cavea rests on an	Located in the western part of the acropolis and faces west. At its foot is a row of stores	40	–	25	–

						artificial slope supported by the two walls of the ambulacrum.					
8. ABILA	–	–	–	–	X	Large theatre sitting between the two hills on which the city was built. The entire cavea appears to rest on a natural slope.	Located on the northeastern slope of the southern hill, and easily accessible from both parts of the city There are other public buildings nearby (including a sanctuary).	73	–	–	
9. DOR	2nd-3rd c. CE	–	–	X	–	Medium-size theatre erected on a level area, its cavea set on an artificial substructure.	Apparently located north and close to the city	60	–	–	–
10. ADRAA	–	–	–	–	X	—	—				
11. LEGIO	2nd-3rd c. CE	–	–	–	X	Large theatre sitting in a natural hollow between two hills, its cavea seemingly set entirely on the natural slopes.		71	–	–	–
12. BOSRA	Early 2nd c. CE	–	X	X	–	Large theatre built on level ground, with all of its three horizontal seating sections set on an artificial substructure created by a system of circumferential and radial vaults. The cavea and the stage building complex have been preserved to their original heights.	Located outside but close to the city. A colonnaded street leads to the theatre. Circus and amphitheatre nearby.	67	21	35	6,000
13. SCYTHOPOLIS (BETH-SHEAN) (Large)	Late 2nd or early 3rd c. CE	–	–	X	–	Large theatre with its ima cavea set on a natural slope while the summa cavea rests on a system of barrel-vaulted radial corridors and circumferential barrel-vaulted radial corridors.	Located in the southern part of the city. A colonnaded street passes nearby. Central public buildings lie to the north.	82	17	+30	6,000
14. SCYTHOPOLIS (BETH-SHEAN) (Small)	–	–	–	X	–	Tiny theatre, perhaps an odeum or a theatre-like building (bouleuterion ?). The entire cavea appears to rest on an artificial slope supported by a circumferential solid wall	Located in the heart of the city near other public buildings. It may have been incorporated with a public building of an unclear nature	+12	–	–	–
15. PELLA	Late 1st or early 2nd c. CE	–	–	X	–	Small theatre, its ima cavea set on a natural slope while the summa cavea rests on an artificial slope supported by the two concentric walls of a barrel-vaulted ambulacrum.	Located south of the city	31	9	14	1,000
16. CAESAREA	Late 1st c. BCE	X	–	X	–	Large theatre. Built in part on a natural slope, the summa cavea rests on an artificial slope supported by a semicircular wall and a series of strong piers running parallel to the circumferential wall, with a continuous barrel vault between them.	Located south of the city	62	16	+30	4,500

Site	Erected	Historical sources	Epigraphical source	Excavation	Survey	Description/ building method	Incorporation in landscape	General diameter	Orchestra diameter	Rows of seats	Estimated capacity
17. SHUMI	2nd-3rd c. CE	–	X	X	–	Small theatre, the ima cavea hewn out of the rocky slope, the summa cavea set on an artificial slope supported by two concentric walls, probably forming a barrel-vaulted ambulacrum.	Apparently located in a sacred precinct connected to the city.	45	13	–	–
18. GERASA (South)	Late 1st c. CE	–	X	–	X	Medium-size theatre, most of it sitting on a natural slope. Only the upper part of the summa cavea rests on a fill supported by the two walls of a barrel-vaulted ambulacrum.	Located in the southern part of the city in the area of the Zeus sanctuary which gave access to the theatre.	60	17	31	5,000
19. GERASA (North)	2nd half 2nd c. CE	–	X	X	–	Small theatre built on level ground. The ima cavea is actually dug into the earth while the summa cavea rests on an artificial slope supported by the two walls of a barrel-vaulted ambulacrum.	Well incorporated into the street network of the northern part of the city, the post-scaenium serving as a passage-way to the street and from there to the large public plaza.	44	8.50	22	1,600
20. GERASA (Birketein)	Late 2nd & 3rd c. CE	–	X	X	–	Tiny theatre. The entire cavea rests on a natural slope.	Located in the sanctuary about 1,200 meters from the city.	28	9	14	1,000
21. SEBASTE	2nd-3rd c. CE	–	–	X	–	Medium-size theatre. The ima cavea rests on a natural slope hewn out and adapted, while the summa cavea is set on the remains of a building from the First Temple period (the Israelite Acropolis). A circumferential wall seems to have bounded the theatre at the upper end of the cavea.	Located in the centre of the city between the main sanctuary area and the forum.	48	14	24	2,500
22. SHECHEM (Neapolis)	1st half 2nd c. CE	X	X	X	–	A large theatre, the entire cavea set on a natural slope. The upper part of the cavea was encircled by a solid wall. The stage building	Located on the slope of the Mount Gerizim.	67	17	–	–

						has not yet been unearthed.					
23. ANTIPATRIS	3rd-4th c. CE	–	–	X	–	Small theatre built on level ground, its cavea set on an artificial slope.	Located near the southern end of the cardo maximus.	–	11	–	–
24. PHILADELPHIA (Large)	2nd half 2nd c. CE	–	–	–	X	Large theatre, the central part of the entire cavea hewn out of the natural slope while its ends and its stage building are built.		74	18	45	6,000
25. PHILADELPHIA (Small)	2nd half 2nd c. CE	–	–	–	X	Small theatre. Erected at the foot of the large theatre, its entire cavea rests on an artificial slope supported by a strong circumferential wall through which three vomitoria were cut.	Located parallel to the east side of the agora, near the large theatre.	36	12	16	1,200
26. JERICHO	Late 1st c. BCE	–	–	–	X	Built on ground level, the theatre's entire cavea rests on an artificial slope supported by a semicircular wall.	Incorporated with the – hippodrome and perhaps also with the gymnasion in a separate enclave, with no connection to the urban area.	–	–	–	
27. ELUSA	1st c. CE	–	X	X	–	Tiny theatre built on level ground, its cavea resting on an artificial slope supported by two semicircular walls with fill between them.	Located in the southeastern lowlands of the city.	28	11	–	–
28. PETRA (Large)	1st. c. CE	–	–	–	X	Large theatre, the entire cavea hewn out of a natural slope. The stage complex is partly hewn and partly built, as are the two aditus maximi.	Located on the slope of the necropolis at Wadi Mousa with no spatial connection to the centre of Petra. A paved road may have run from the city to the theatre.	69	14	45	7,000
29. PETRA (Small)	1st-2nd c. CE	–	–	–	X	Tiny theatre, the entire cavea rests on an artificial slope supported by two semicircular walls.	The theatre was erected at the eastern end of the city on the north bank of Wadi Mousa. The colonnaded street of Petra may have continued to the theatre.	–	11	–	–
30. WADI SABRA	1st-2nd c. CE	–	–	–	X	Tiny theatre, the entire cavea apparently hewn out of the rocky escarpment. The orchestra level was 2.50 m. below the level of the bottom row of seats, and a water supply system may have led to the orchestra.	Located on a steep slope above the wadi riverbed, part of the sanctuary outside Petra.	27	19	10	800

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	*Archäologischer Anzeiger*
AAS	*Annales Archéologiques de Syrie*
AASOR	*Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
ABSA	*Annual of the British School at Athens*
ADAJ	*Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan*
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BAR	*British Archaeological Reports International Series*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
Berytus	*Berytus Archaeological Studies*
BIES	*Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society*
BMB	*Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth*
DaM	*Damaszener Mitteilungen, DAI Damaskus*
EAEHL	*Encyclopedia of the Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land, London* 1975–1978
HA	*Hadashot Arkeologiyot*
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JRA	*Journal of Roman Archaeology*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JSAH	*Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*
Levant	*Journal of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem*
LA	*Liber Annus, Journal of Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Jerusalem*
PEFQ	*Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* (1869–1936, continued as *PEQ*)
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (continuation of *PEFQ*)
PUAES	*Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria*
QDAP	*Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine*
Qedem	*Monographs of the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*
RB	*Revue biblique*
SCI	*Scripta Classica Israelica, Journal of the Israel Society for the Promotion of Classical Studies*
SHAJ	*Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan*
Syria	*Syria revue d'art oriental et d'archéologie*
TJAB	*Government of Trans-Jordan Antiquities Bulletin*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

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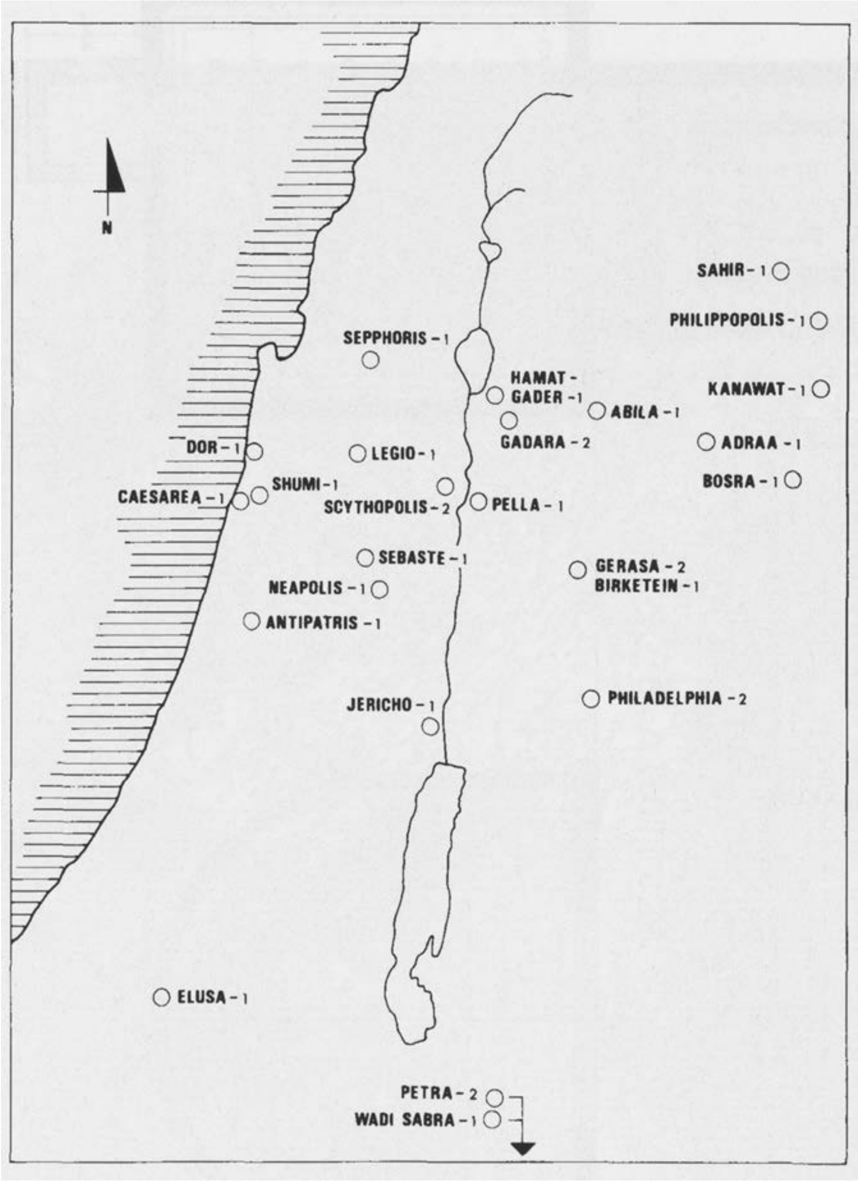
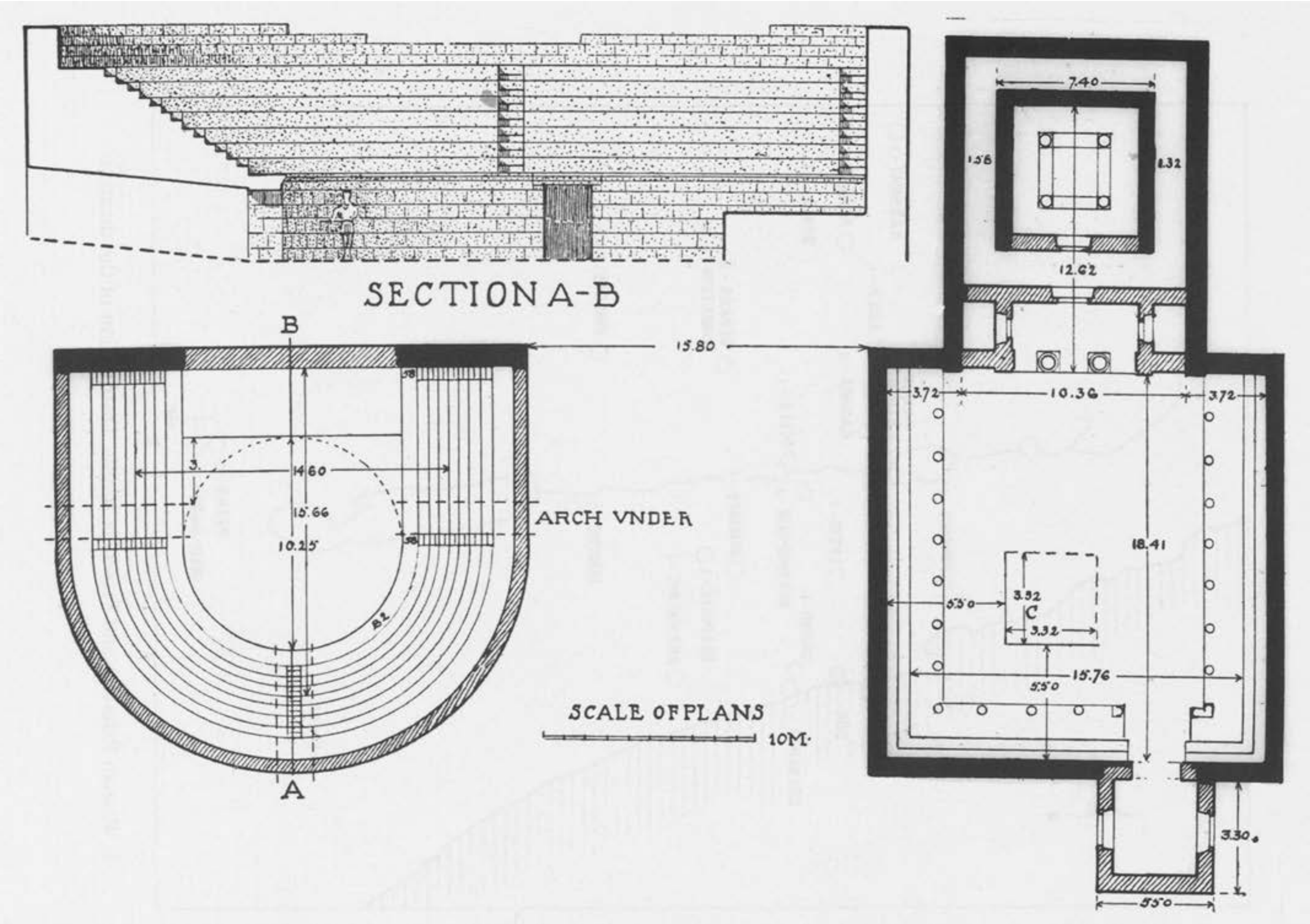
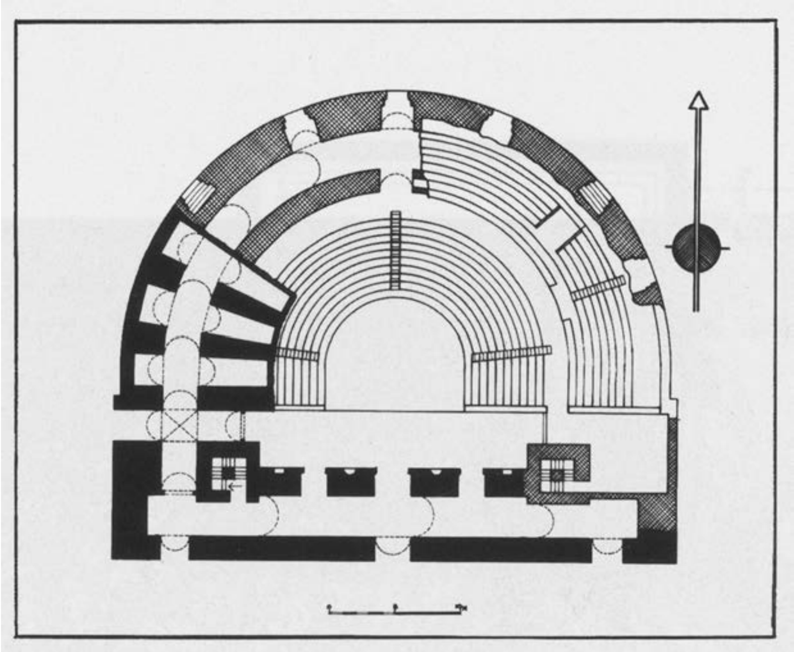


1. Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia. Distribution of the theatres.

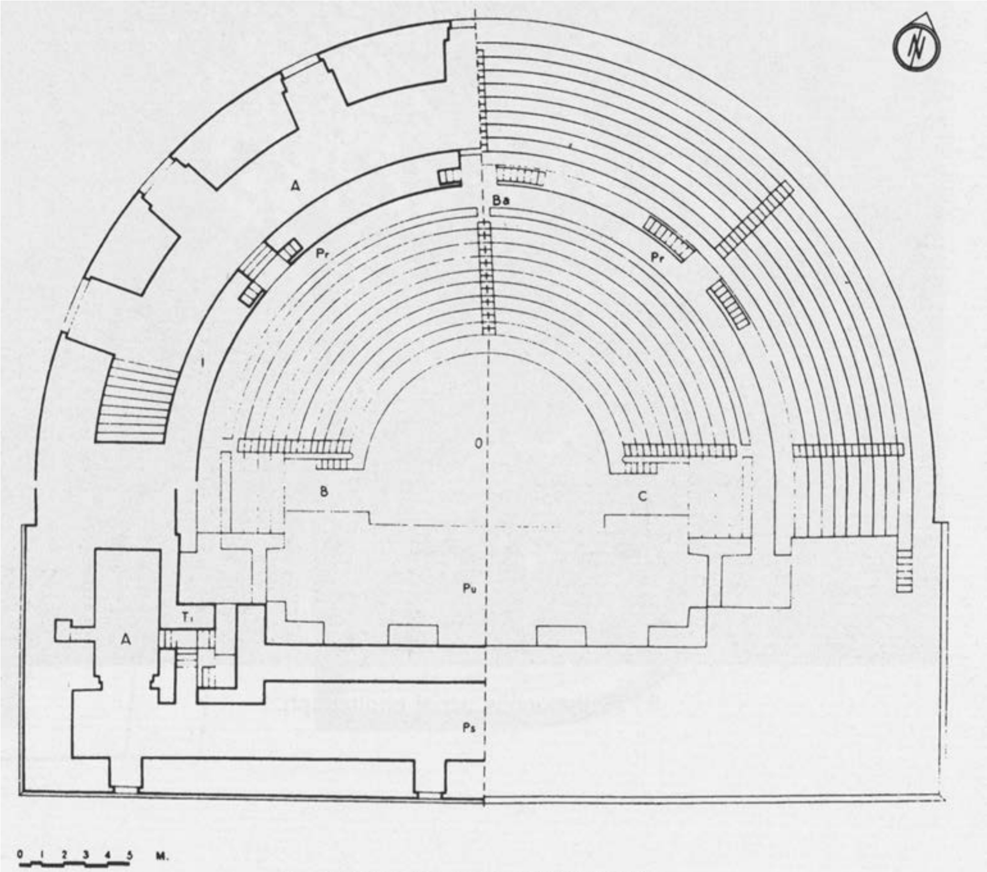


2. Sahir, plan of the theatre.

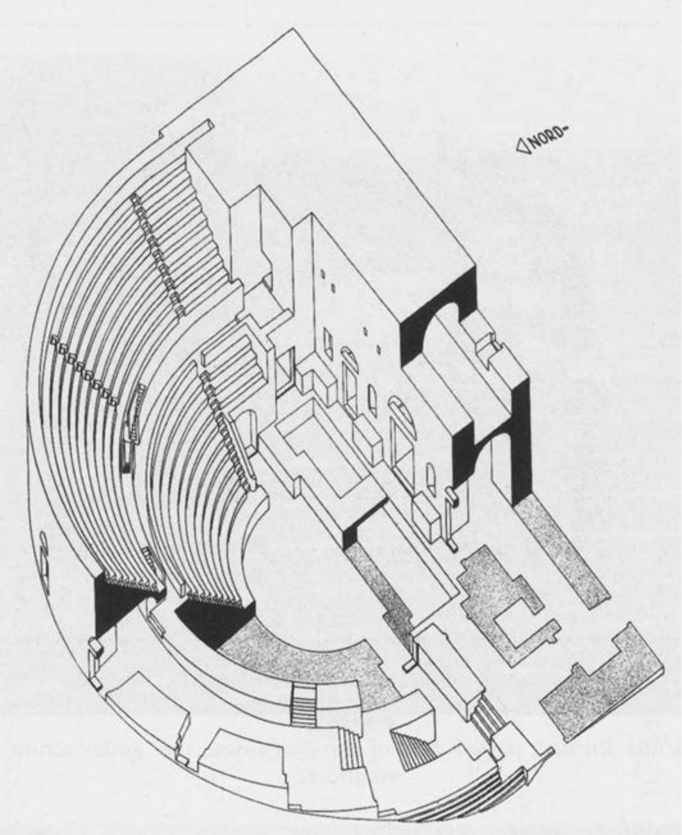
3. Philippopolis, aerial photograph.



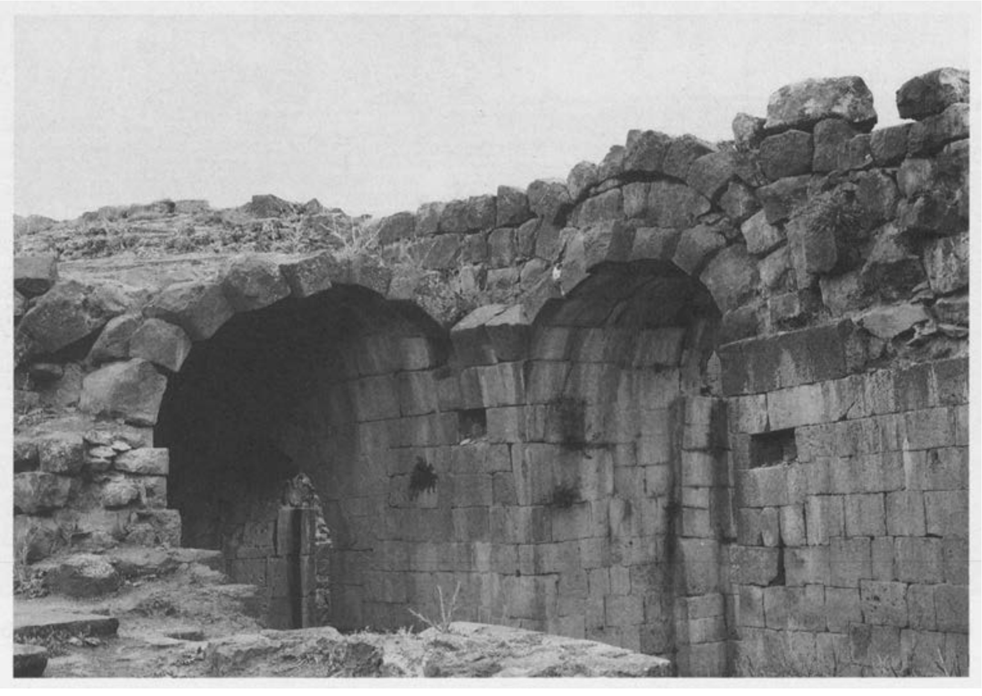
4. Philippopolis, plan of the theatre.



5. Philippopolis, plan of the theatre.



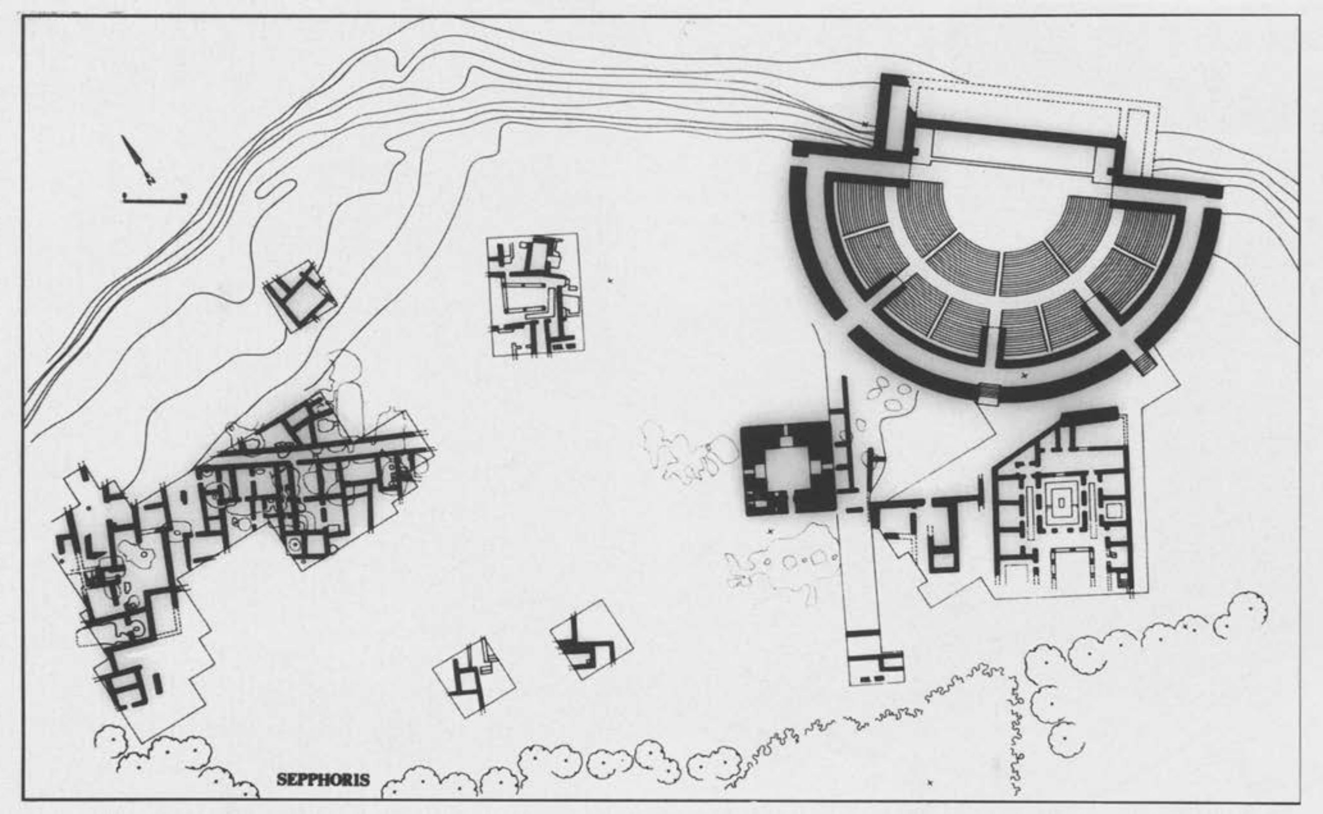
6. Philippopolis, the theatre, suggested reconstruction.



7. Philippopolis, the theatre, segment of the ambulacrum.

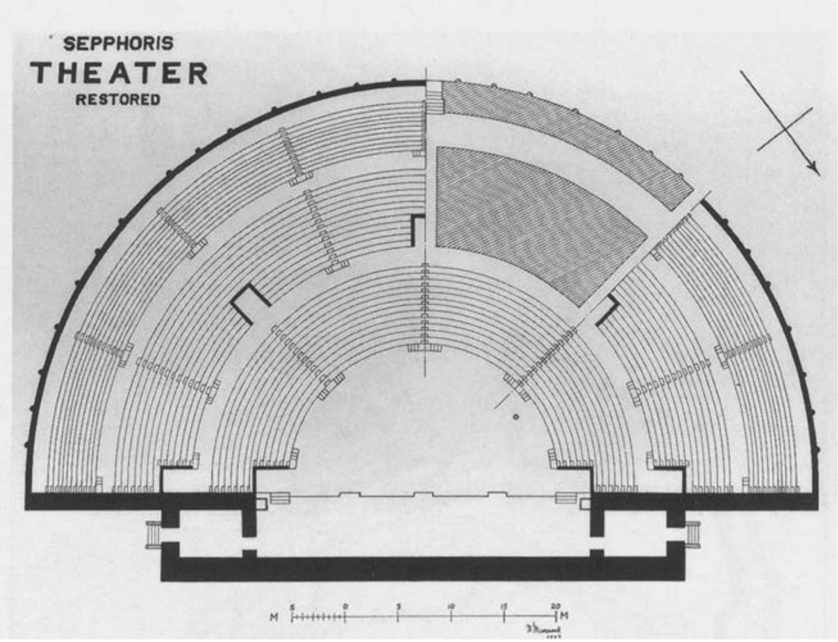
8. Philippopolis, the theatre, partial view of the ima cavea, the ambulacrum and two of the vomitoria.

9. Philippopolis, the theatre, partial view of the ima cavea, the western aditus maximus and the orchestra.



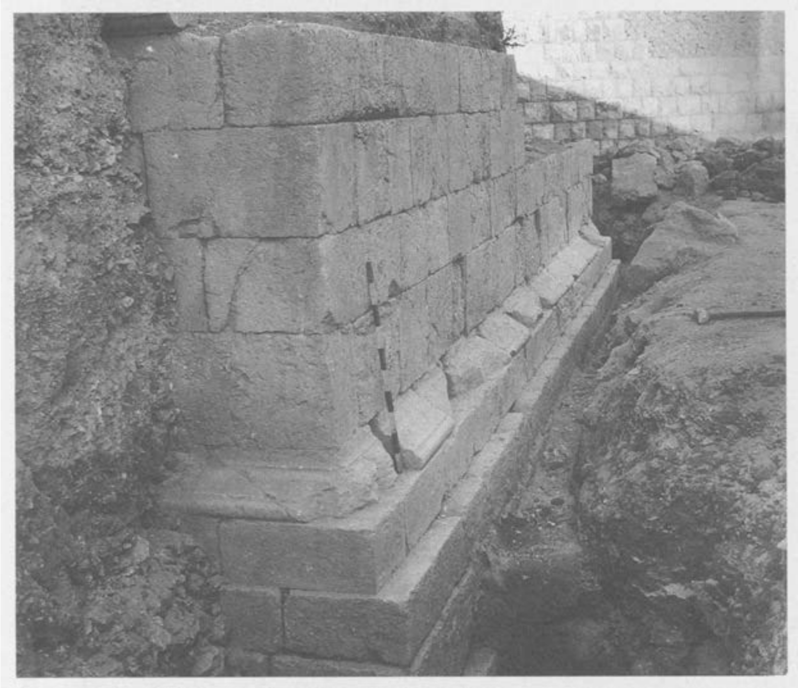
10. Sepphoris, the acropolis. Note the location of the theatre.

11. Sepphoris, the theatre, general view.



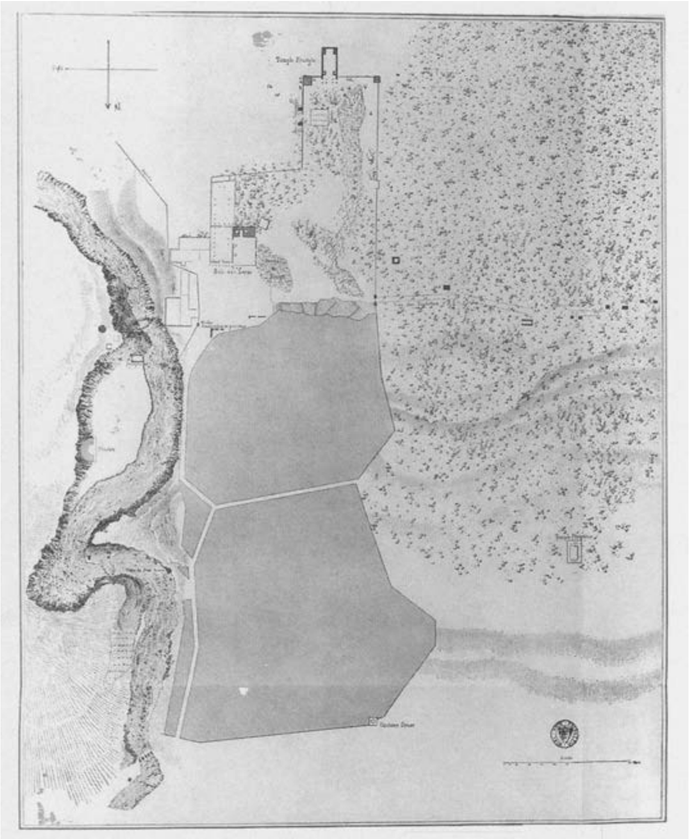
12. Sepphoris, plan of the theatre.

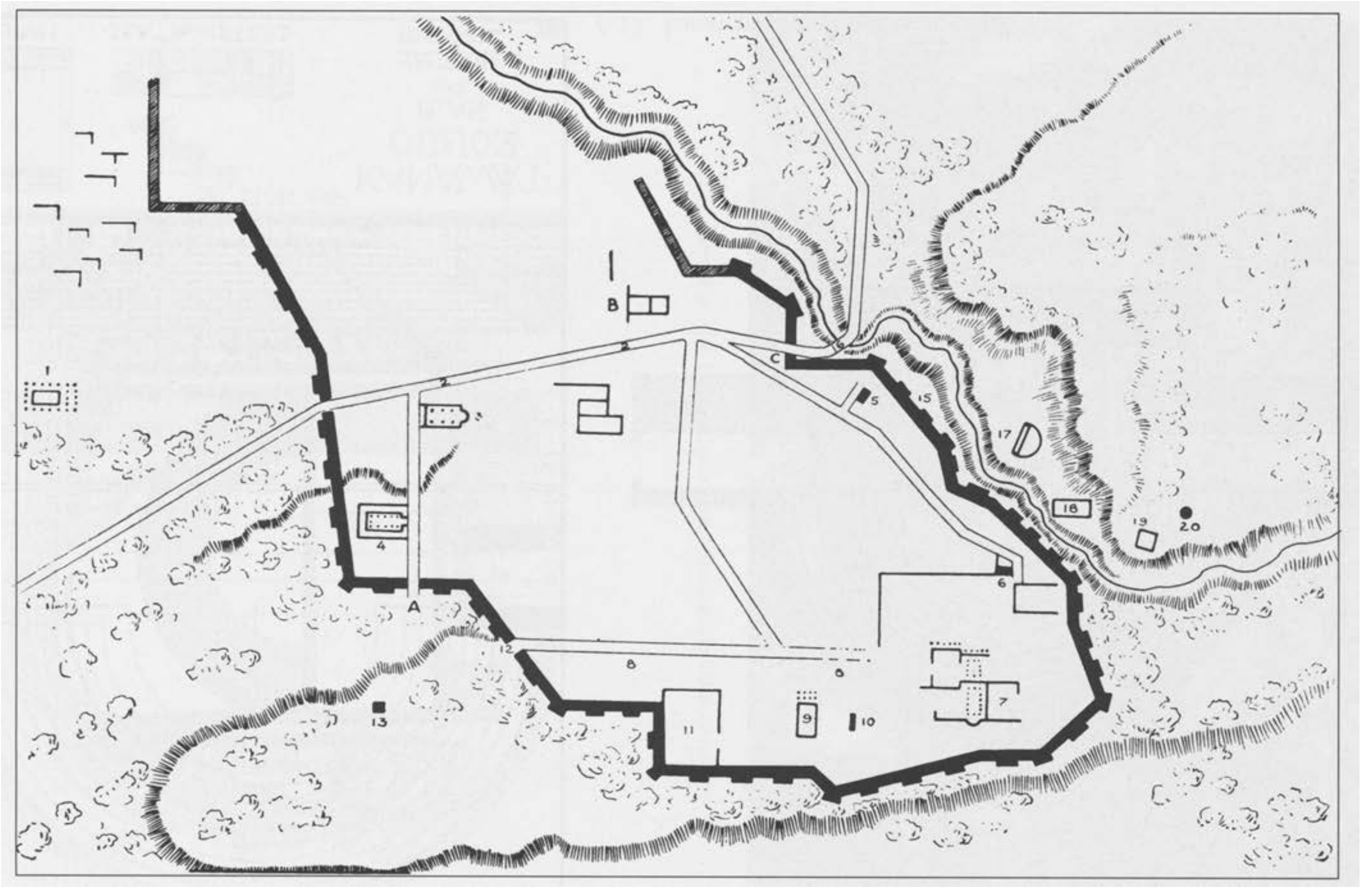
13. Sepphoris, the theatre. Note the remains of one of the vomitoria.



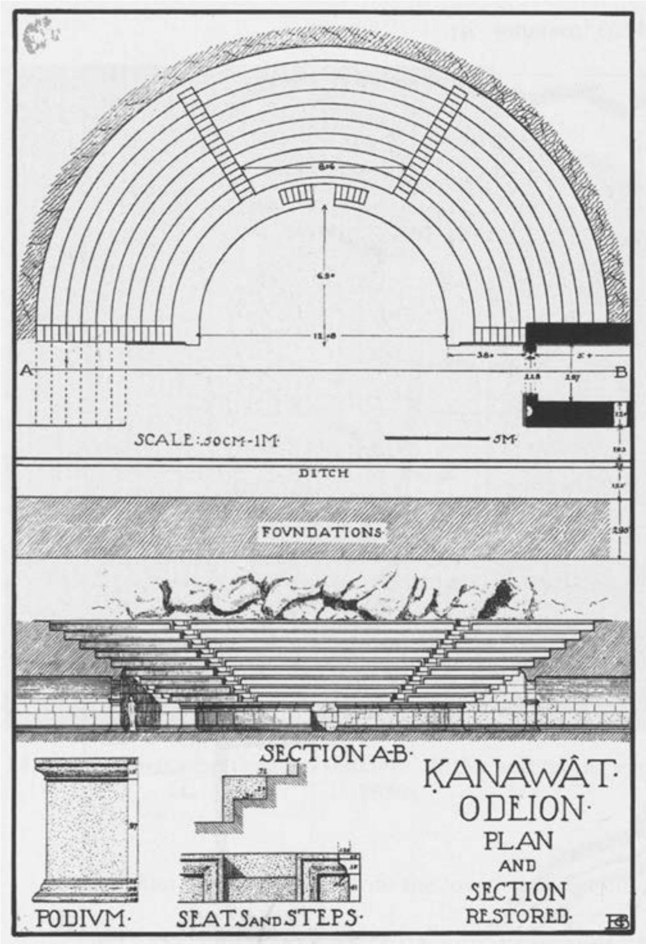
14. Sepphoris, the theatre, segment of the scaena, as exposed in the 1930s.

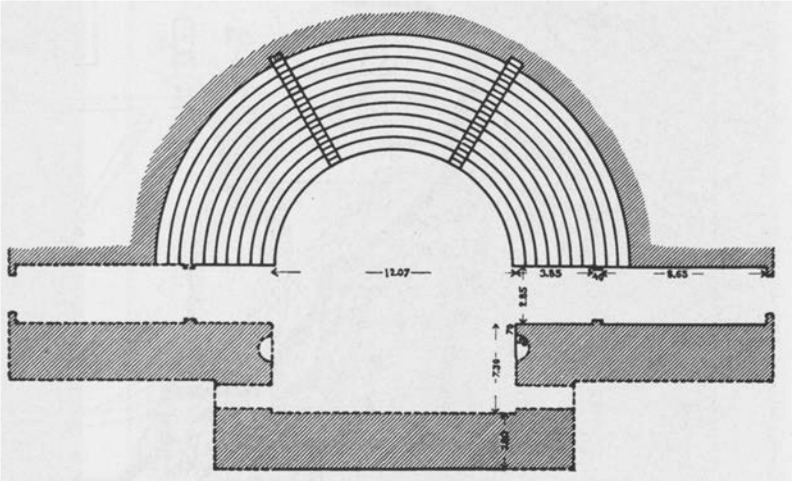
15. Kanawat, city-plan. Note the location of the theatre. →





16. Kanawat, city-plan. Note the location of the theatre.

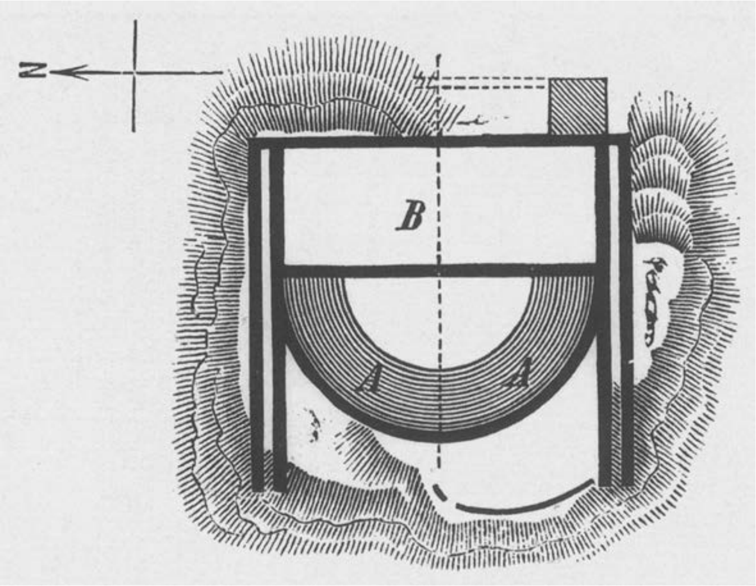




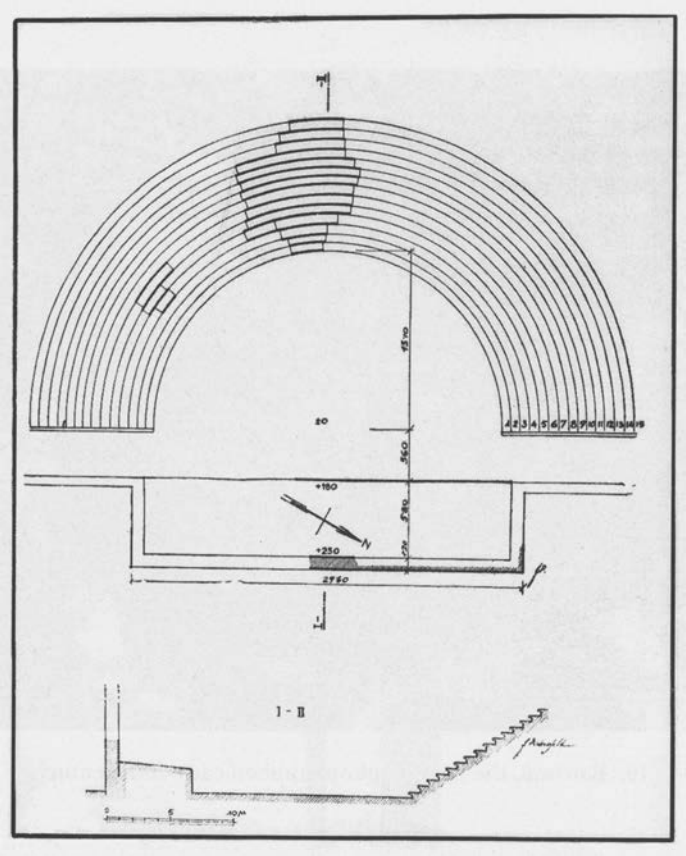
18. Kanawat, plan of the theatre.

←17. Kanawat, plan of the theatre.

19. Kanawat, the theatre, photographed early 20th century.



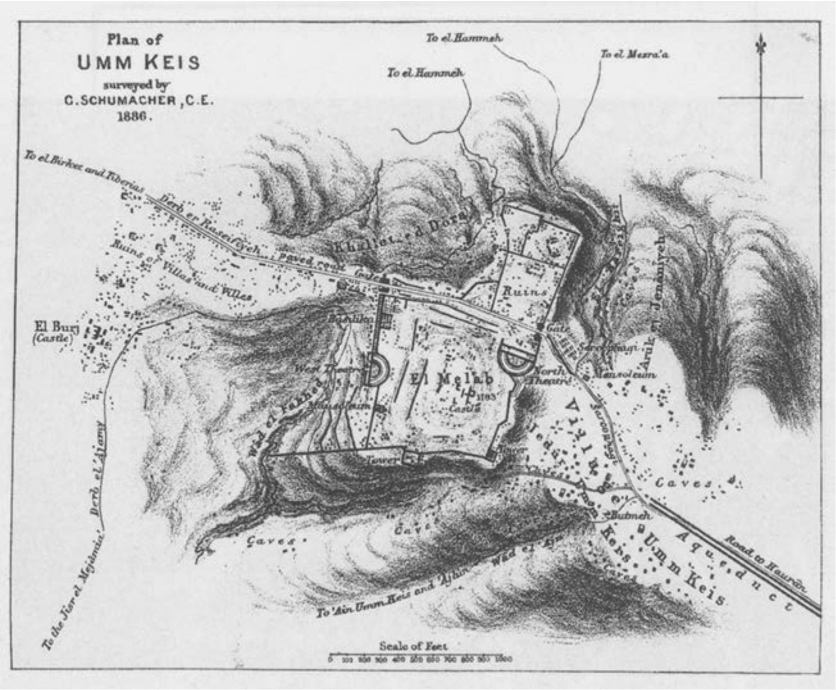
20. Hammat-Gader, plan of the theatre.



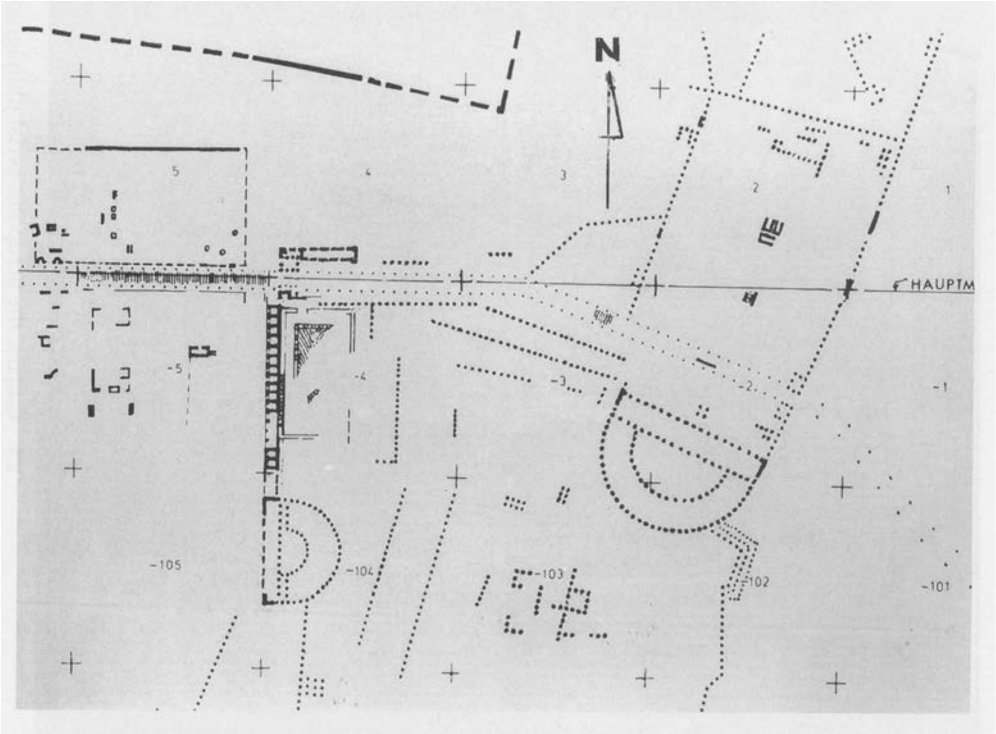
21. Hammat-Gader, plan of the theatre.

22. Hammat-Gader, the theatre, central segment of the cavea as exposed by Sukenik.

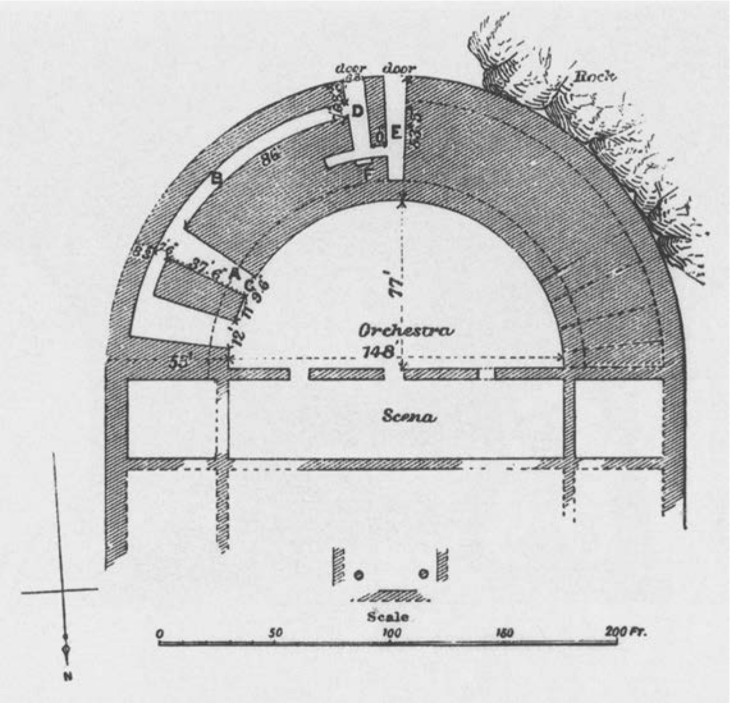
23. Gadara, the acropolis, aerial photograph. Note the location of the two theatres.



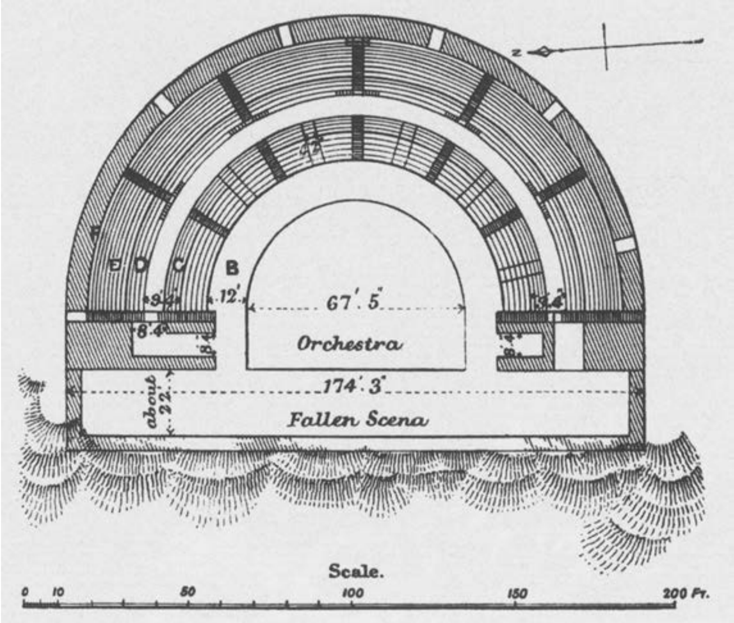
24. Gadara, city-plan.



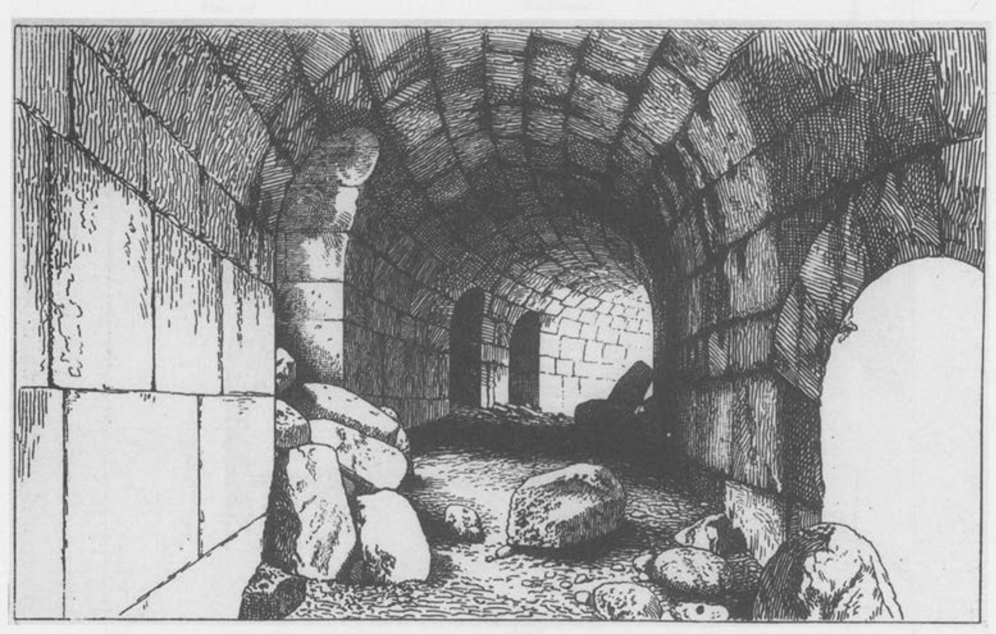
25. Gadara, the acropolis, plan. Note the location of the two theatres and the decumanus maximus.



26. Gadara, the north theatre, plan.



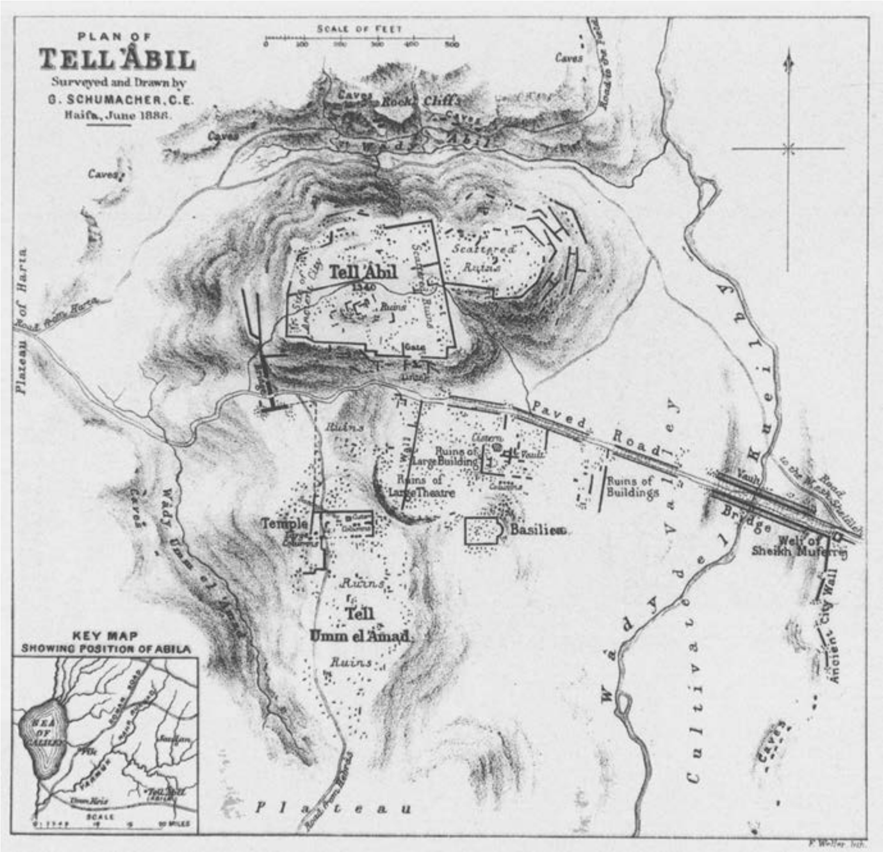
27. Gadara, the west theatre, plan.



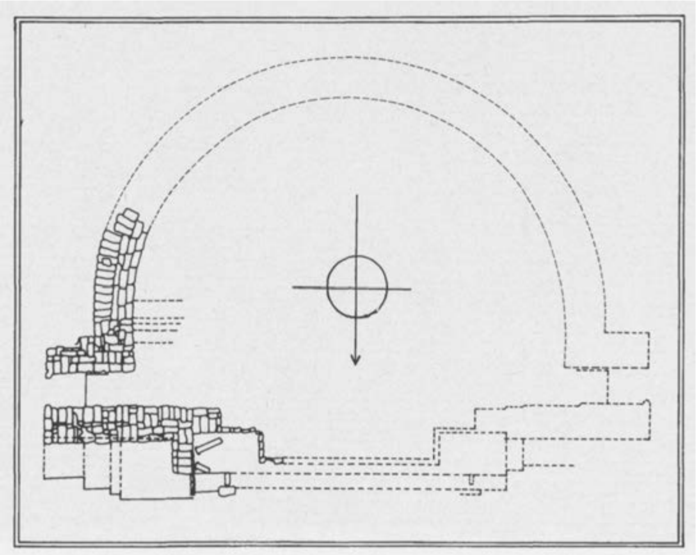
28. Gadara, the west theatre, an ambulacrum.

29. Gadara, the west theatre, general view.

30. Gadara, the west theatre, general view of the cavea, the northern aditus maximus and the northern itinera versurarum.



31. Abila, city-plan. Note the location of the theatre.

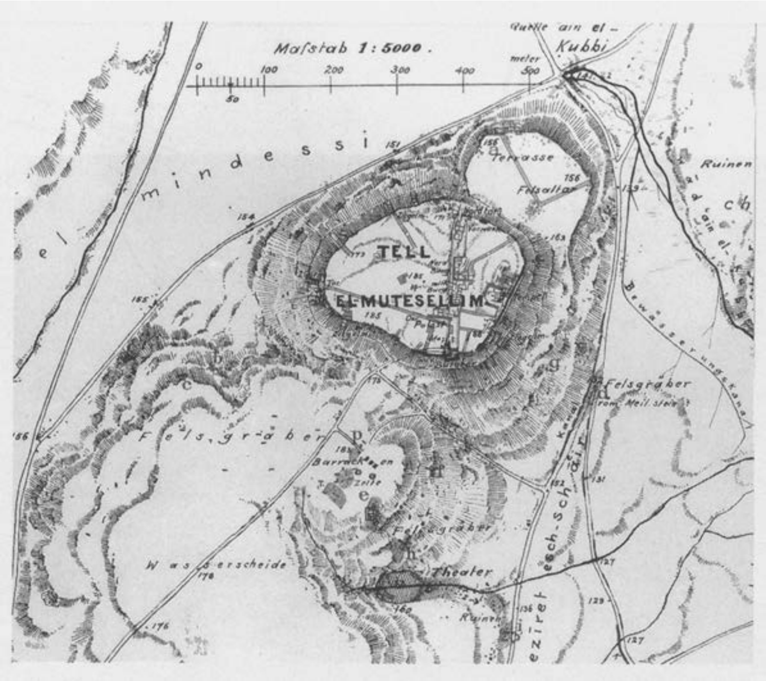


32. Dor, the theatre, partial plan.

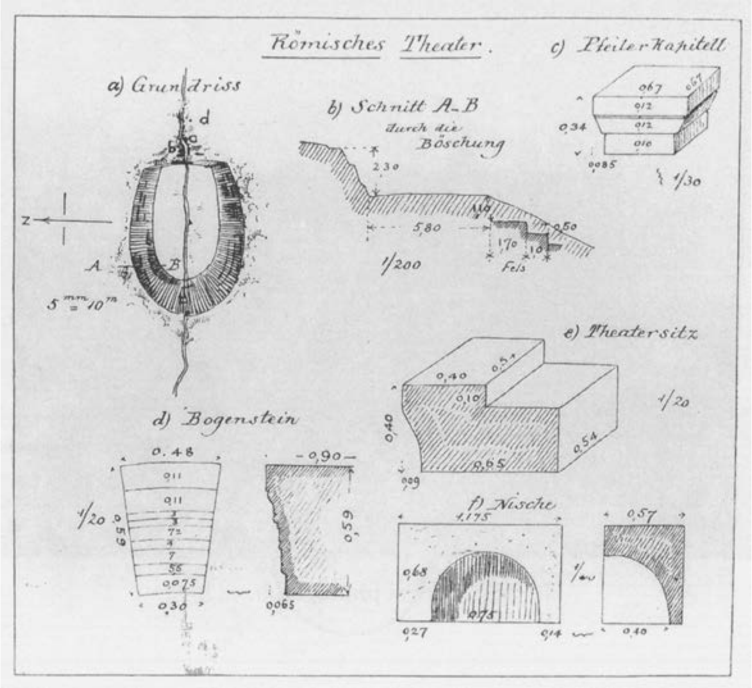
33. Dor, the theatre, segment of scaena, as seen today.

34. Adraa, the theatre, general view.

35. Legio, the theatre, aerial photograph.

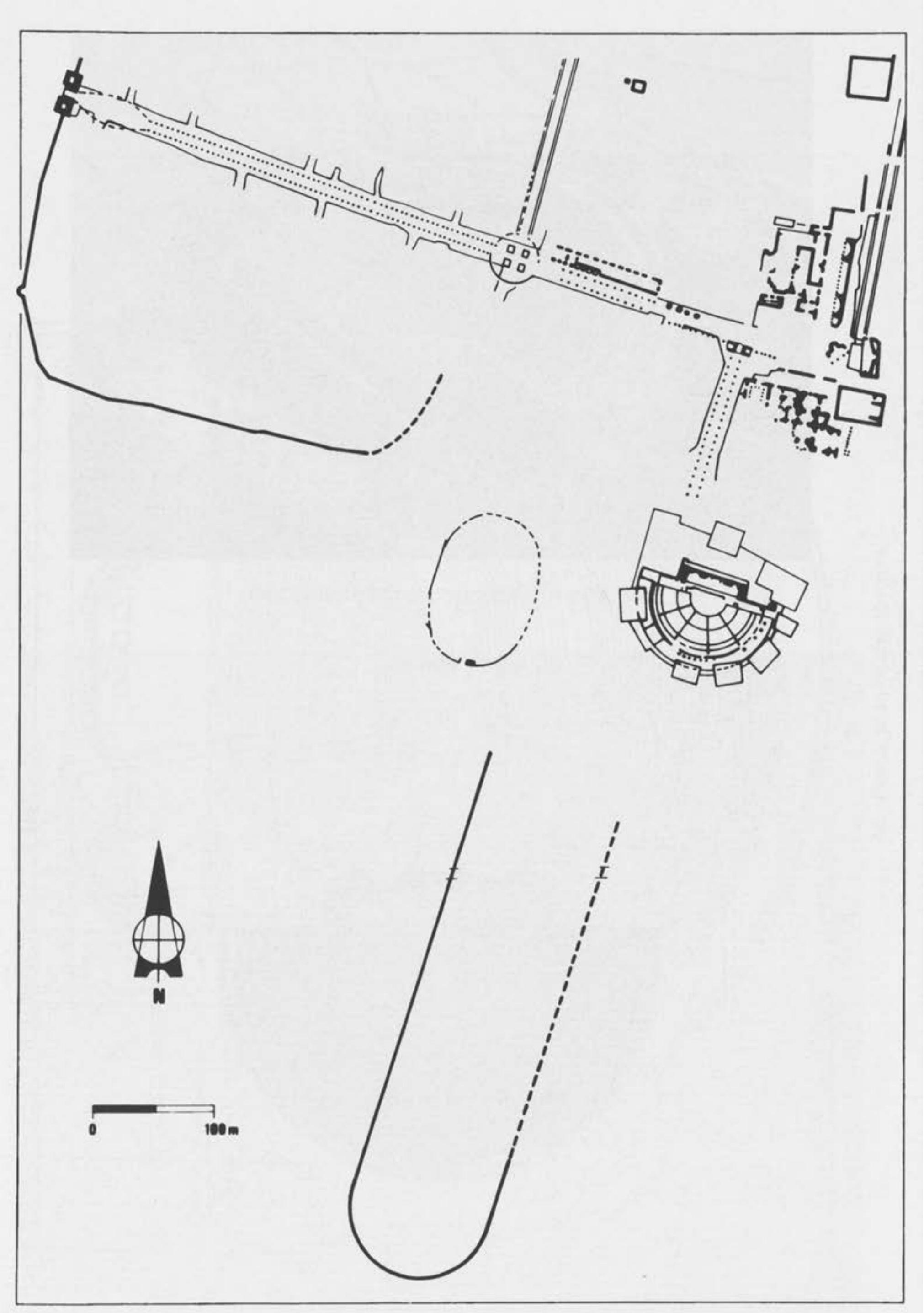


36. Legio, general map of the site. Note the location of the theatre.

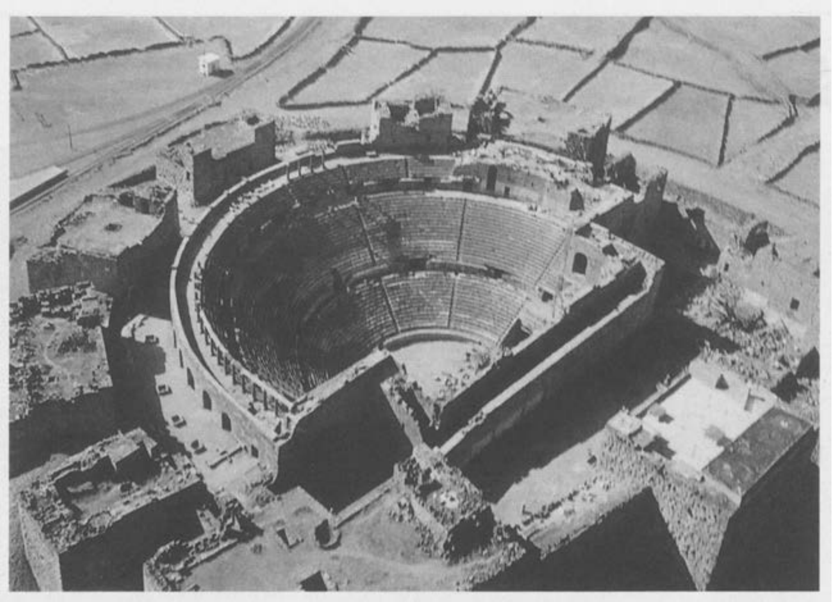


37. Legio, the theatre, schematic plan.

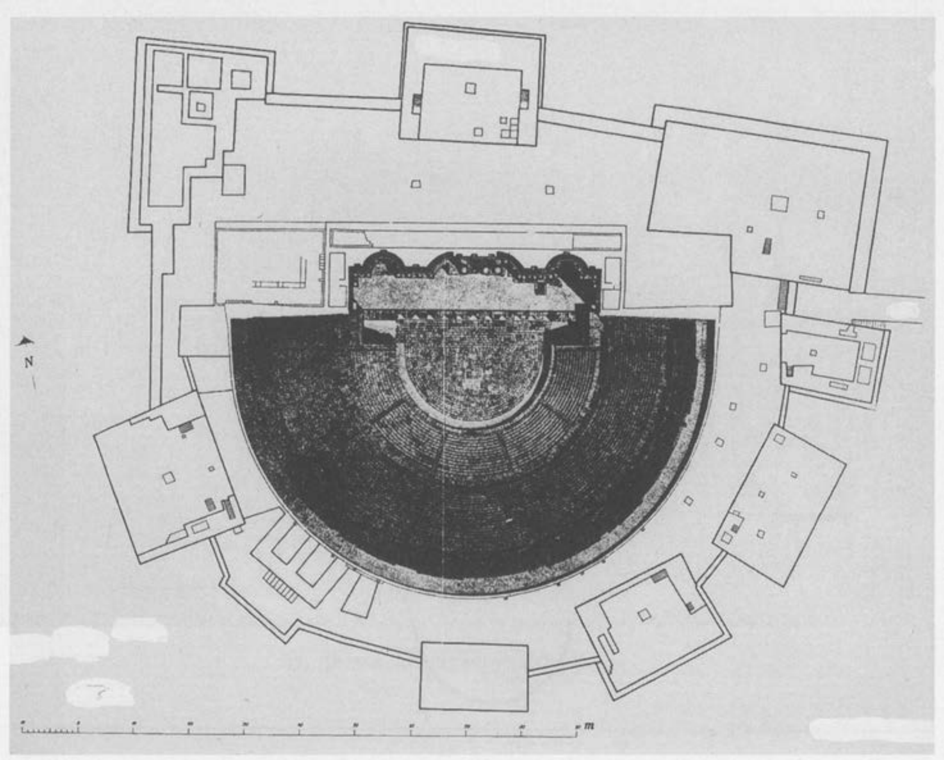
38. Bosra, aerial photograph.



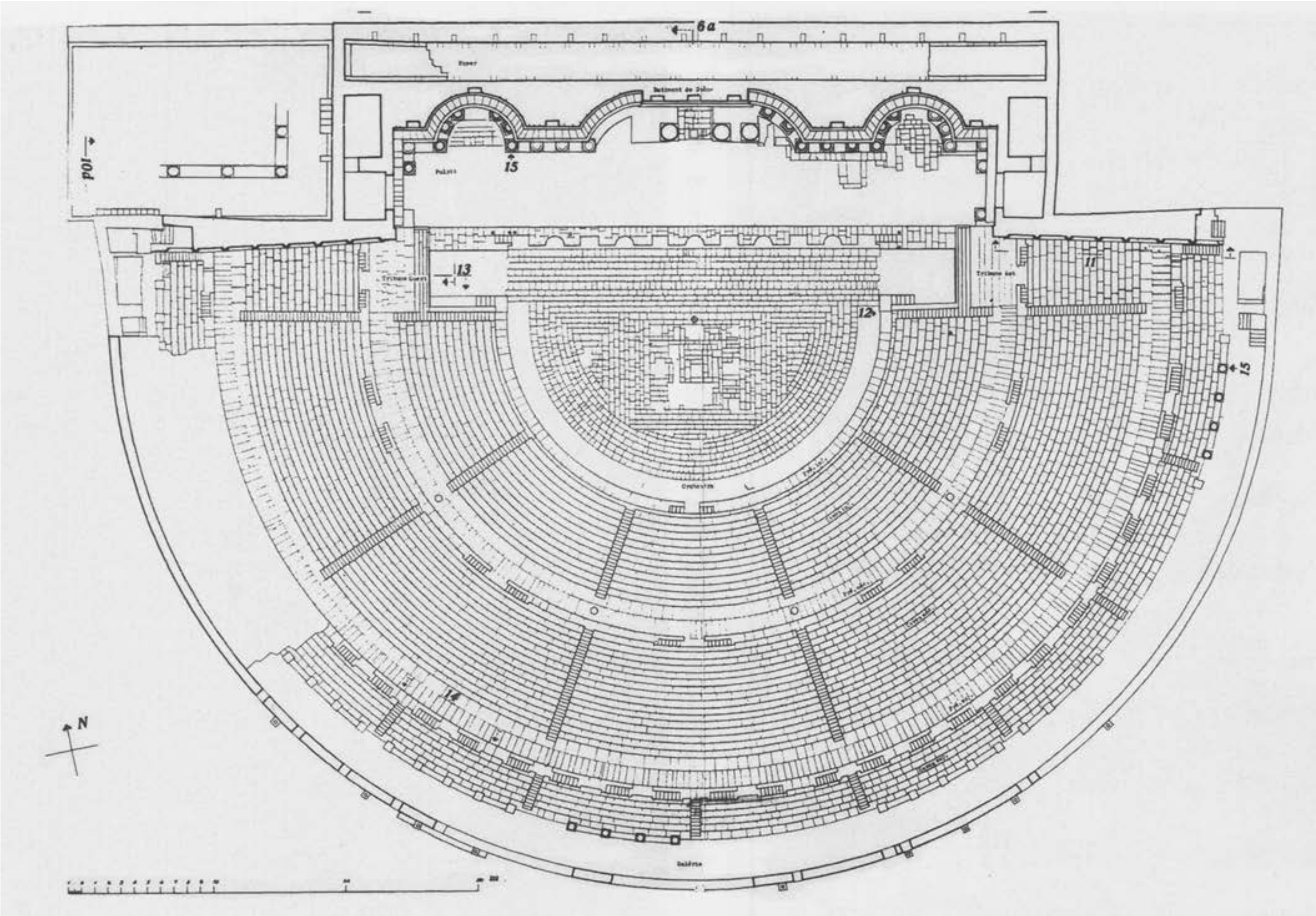
39. Bosra, the southern part of the city. Note the location of the theatre, the amphitheatre and the circus.



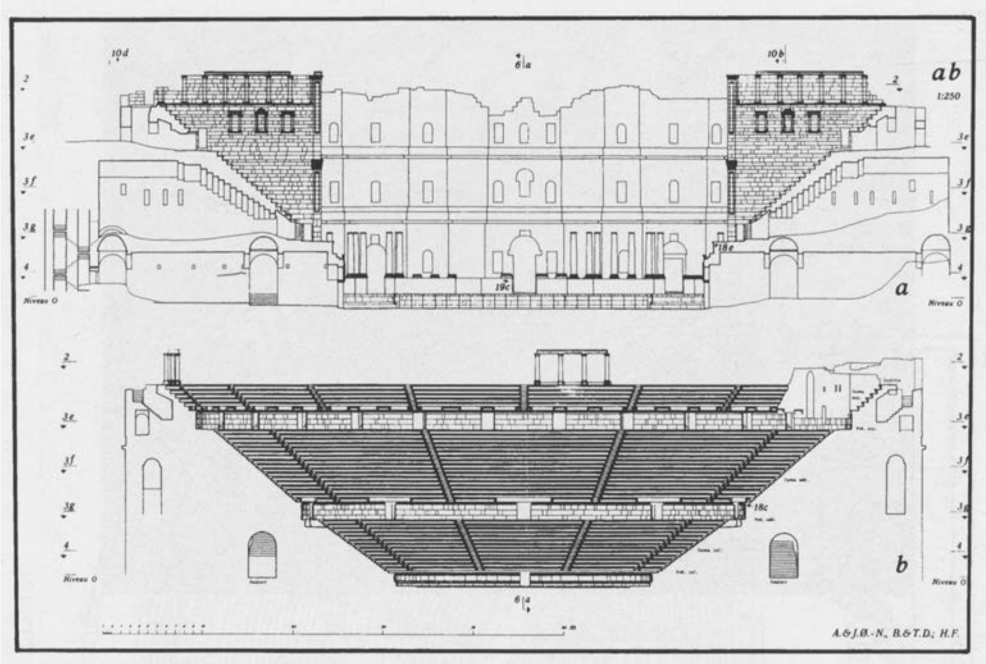
40. Bosra, the theatre, aerial photograph.



41. Bosra, the theatre and the medieval fortress.



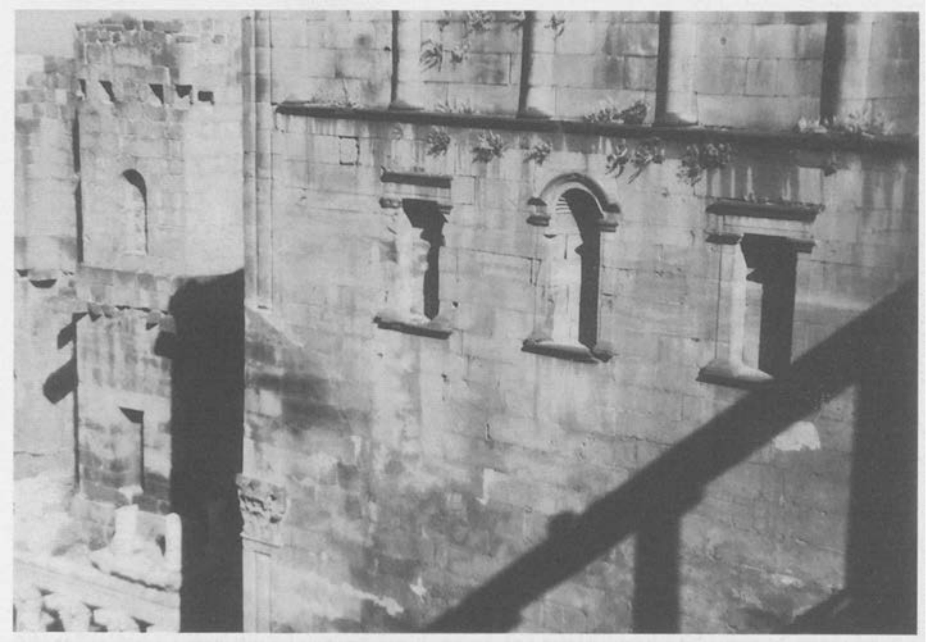
42. Bosra, plan of the theatre.



43. Bosra, the theatre, sections.

44. Bosra, the theatre. Note the partially reconstructed scaenae frons.

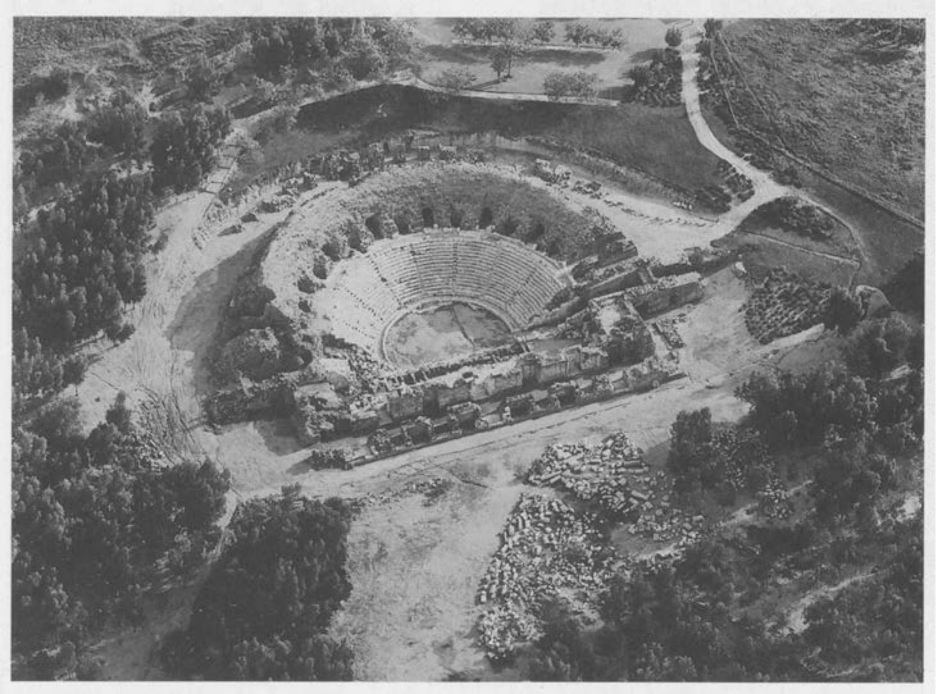
45. Bosra, the theatre, the scaenae frons and the western versura.



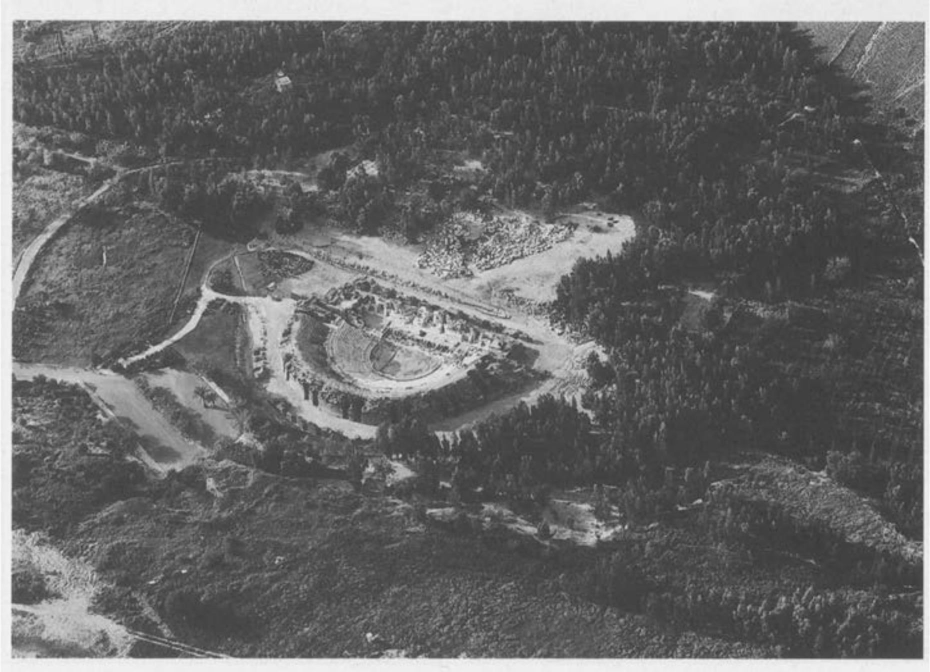
46. Bosra, the theatre, eastern versura. Note the semicircular niches and half-columns decorating the front wall of a versura.

47. Bosra, the theatre, the upper segment of the summa cavea as photographed at the beginning of the 20th century.

48. Bosra, the theatre, the eastern segment of the cavea. Note the partially reconstructed scaenae frons and porticus.

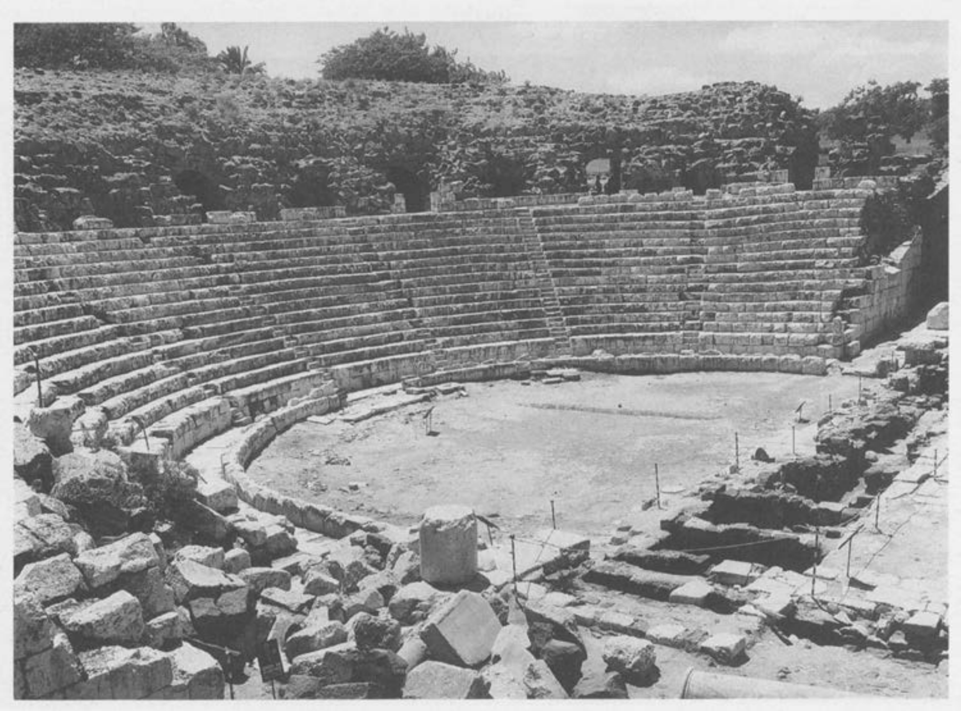


49. Scythopolis (Beth-Shean), the large theatre, aerial photograph, view from the north.

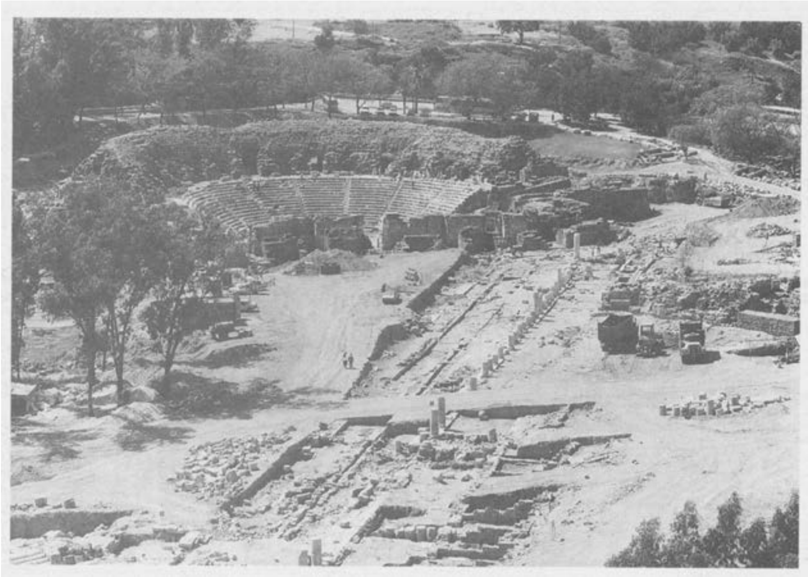


50. Scythopolis (Beth-Shean), the large theatre, aerial photograph, view from the south.

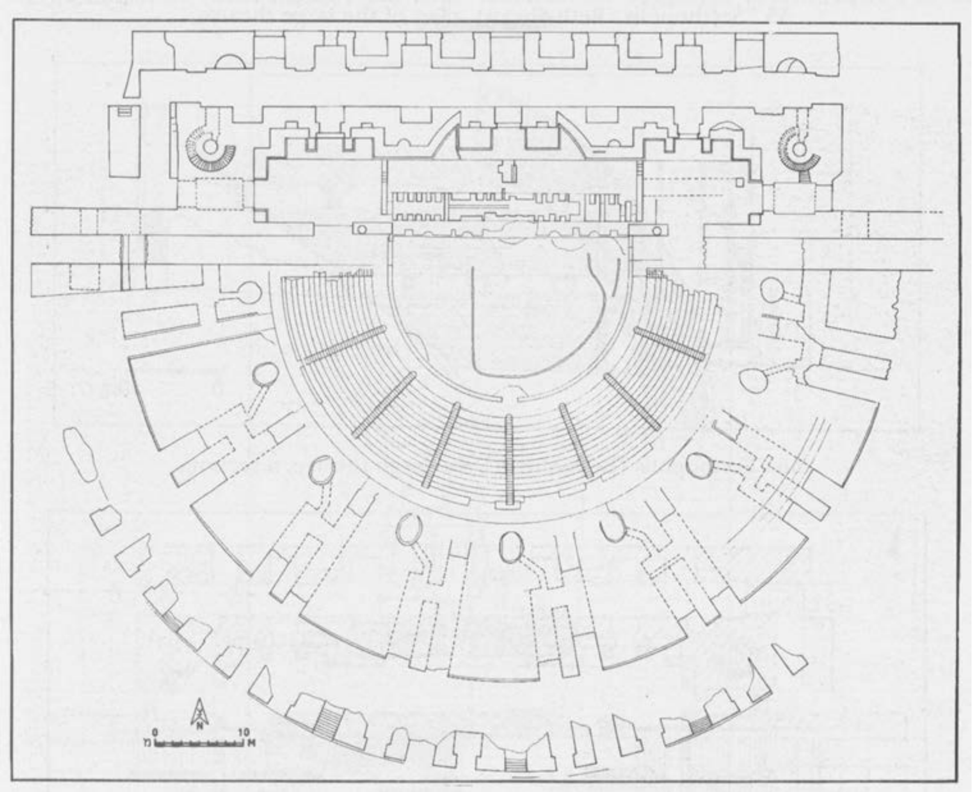
51. Scythopolis (Beth-Shean), the large theatre, general view of the cavea.



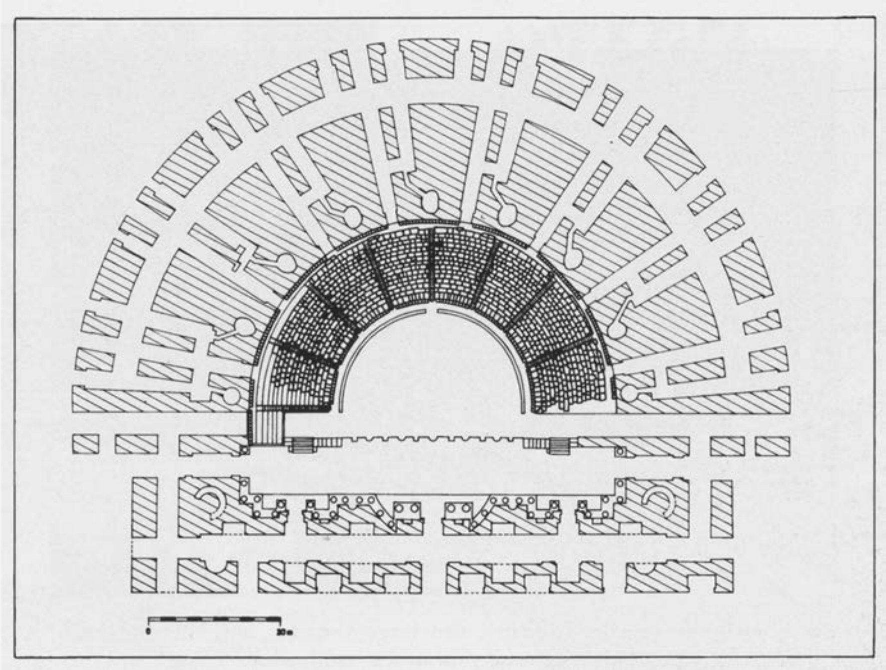
52. Scythopolis (Beth-Shean), the large theatre, general view of the orchestra and the cavea.



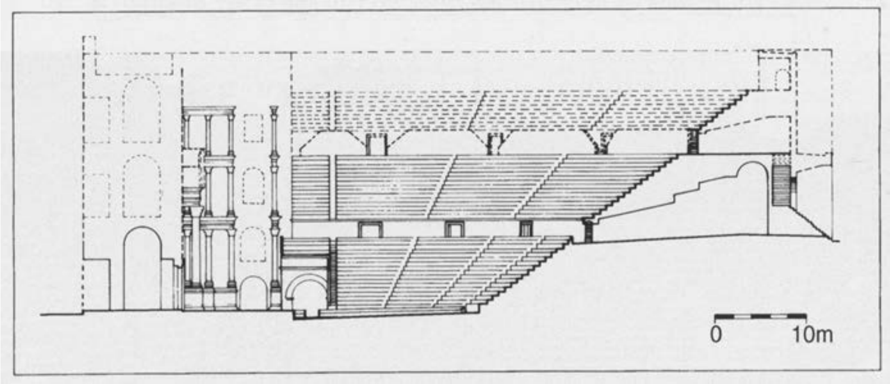
53. Scythopolis (Beth-Shean), the large theatre, and the Byzantine street, general view to the south-west.



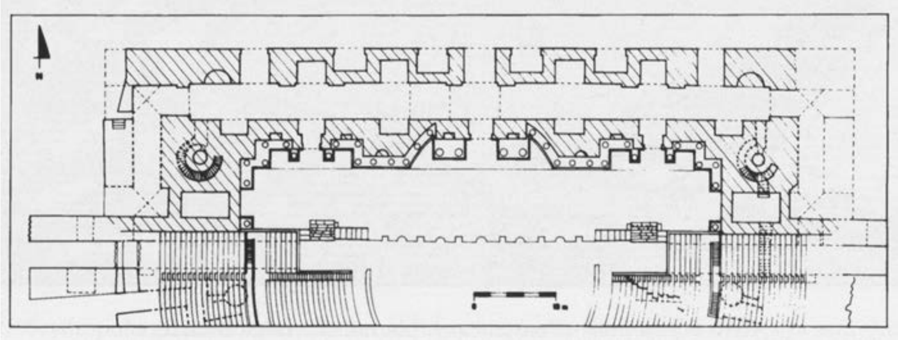
54. Scythopolis (Beth-Shean), plan of the large theatre.



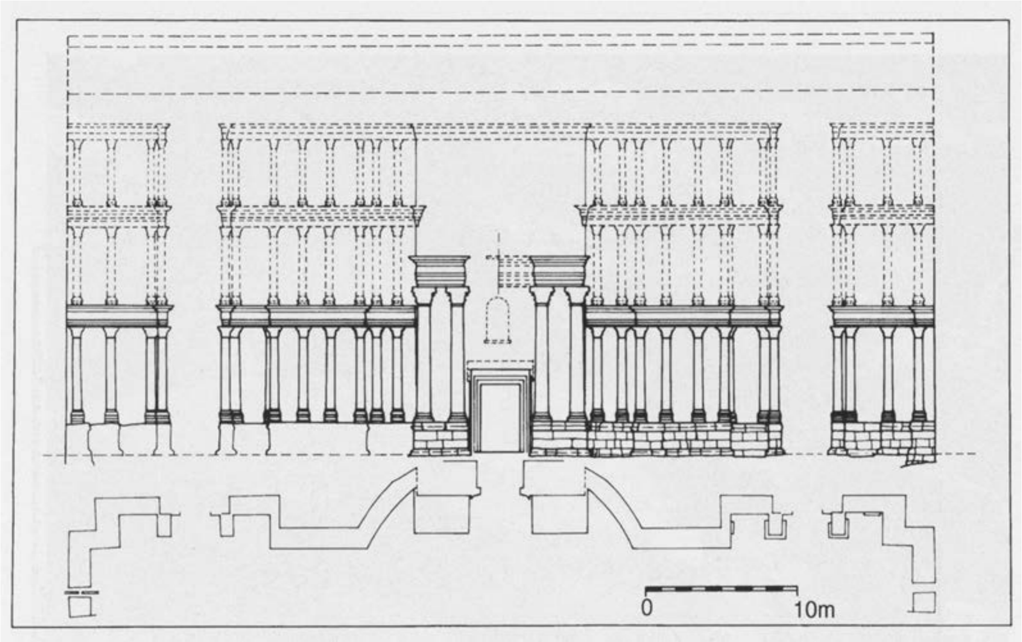
55. Scythopolis (Beth-Shean), plan of the large theatre.



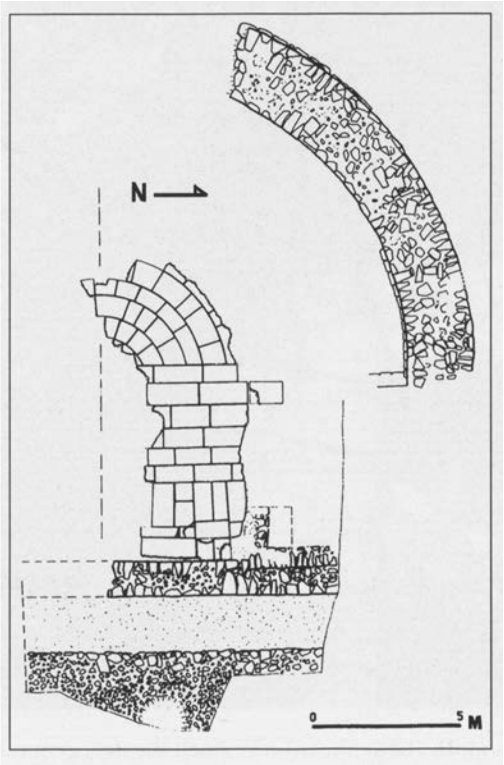
56. Scythopolis (Beth-Shean), the large theatre, a section.



57. Scythopolis (Beth-Shean), the large theatre, the scaena, plan.

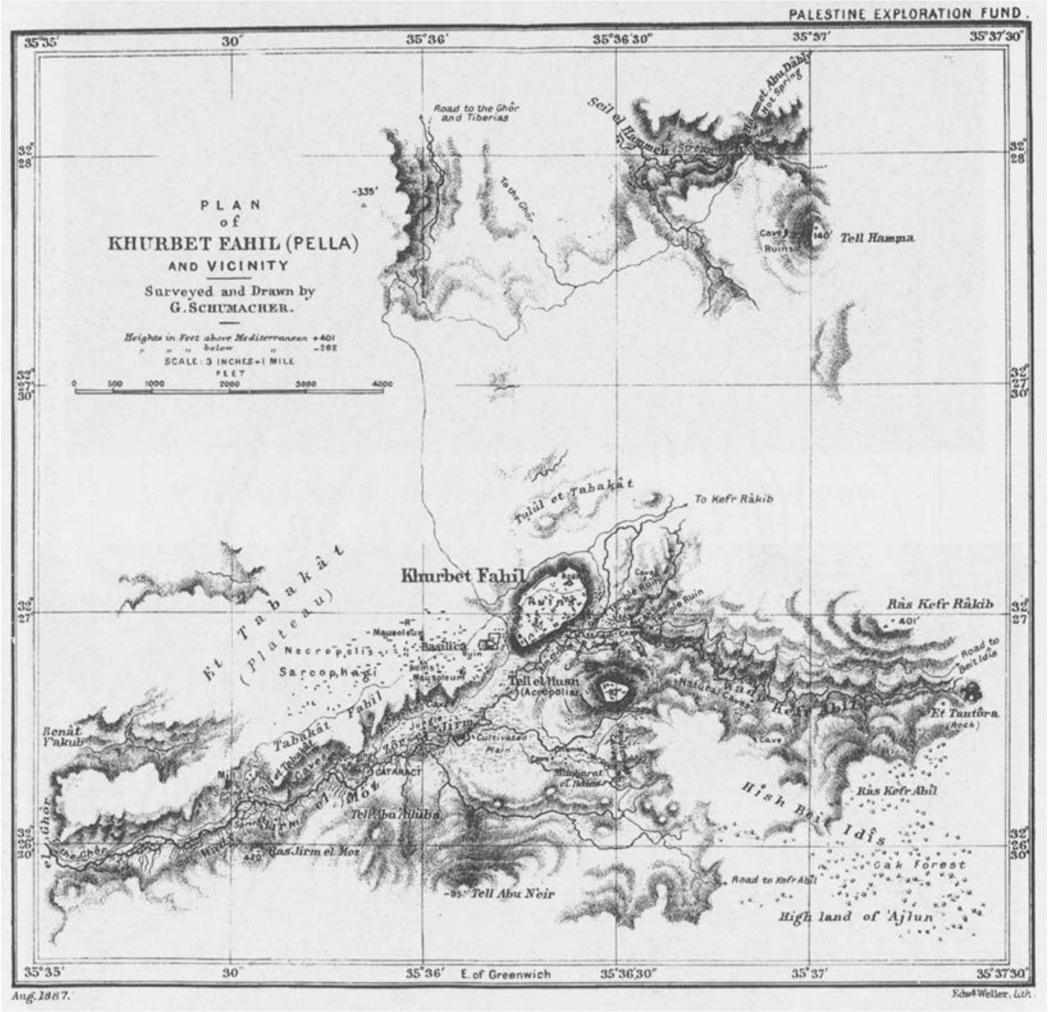


58. Scythopolis (Beth-Shean), the large theatre with suggested reconstruction of the scaenae frons.

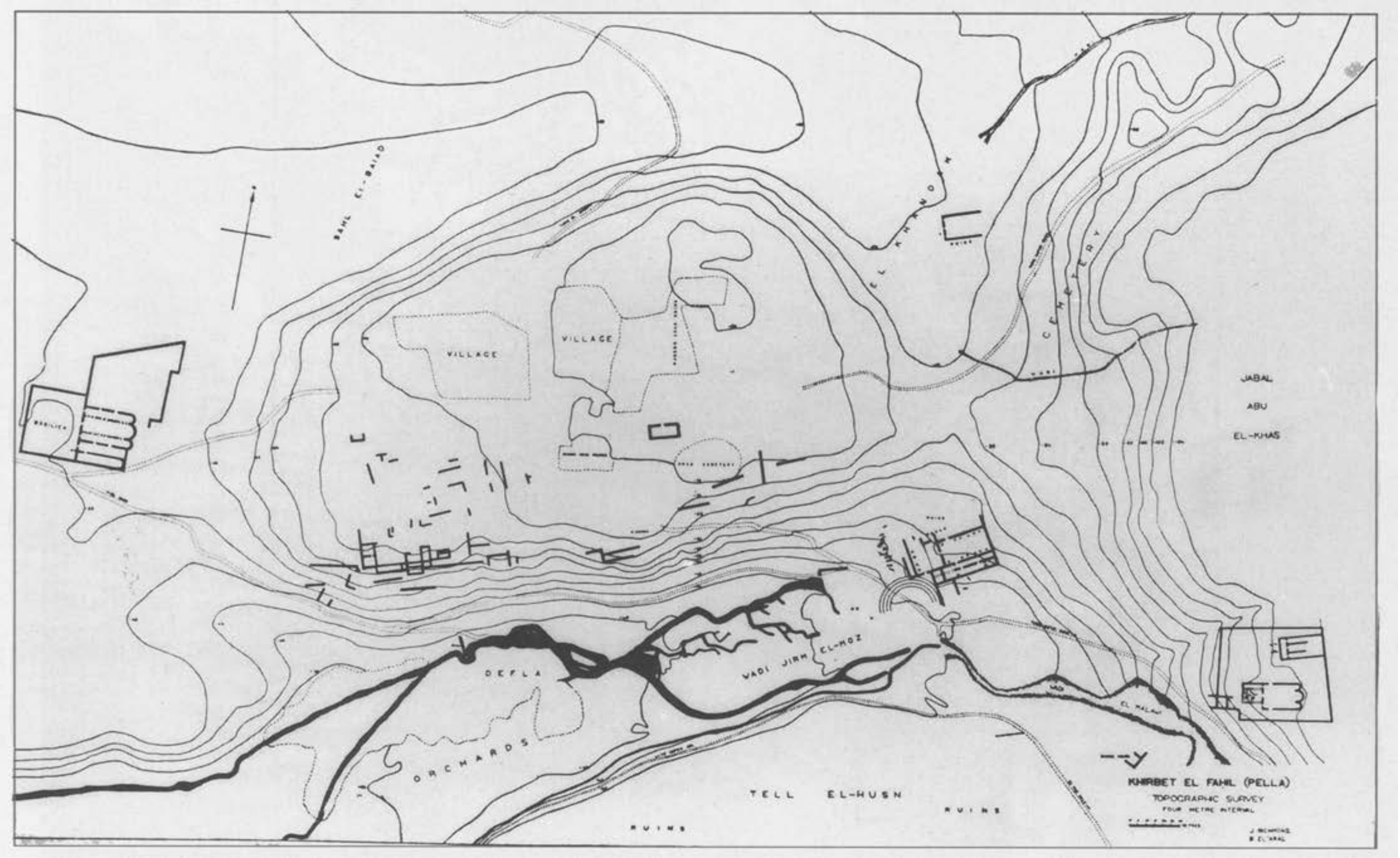


59. Scythopolis (Beth-Shean), the small theatre, partial plan.

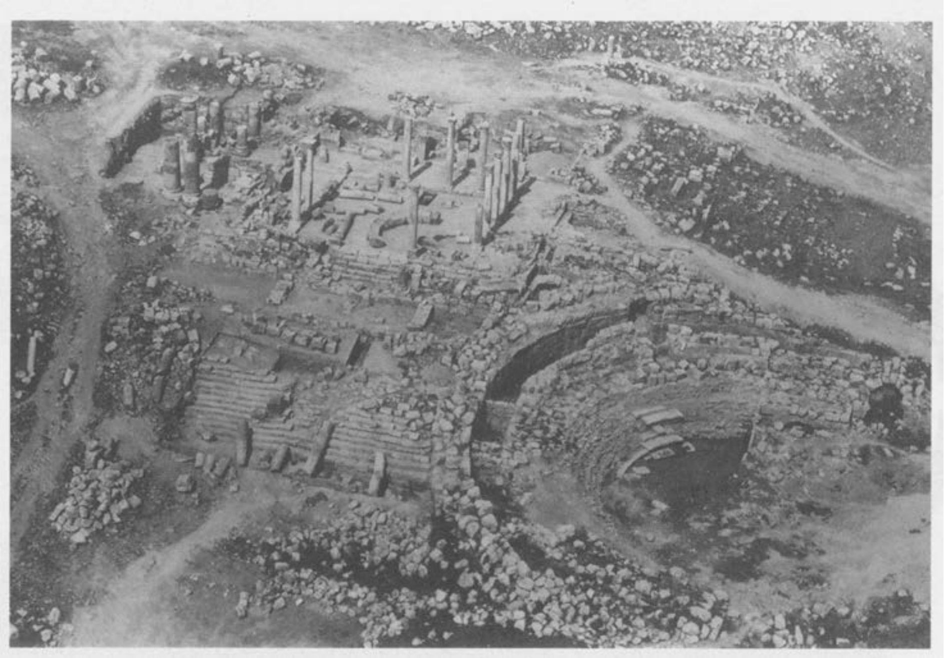
60. Scythopolis (Beth-Shean), the small theatre, general view.



61. Pella, general plan of the site.

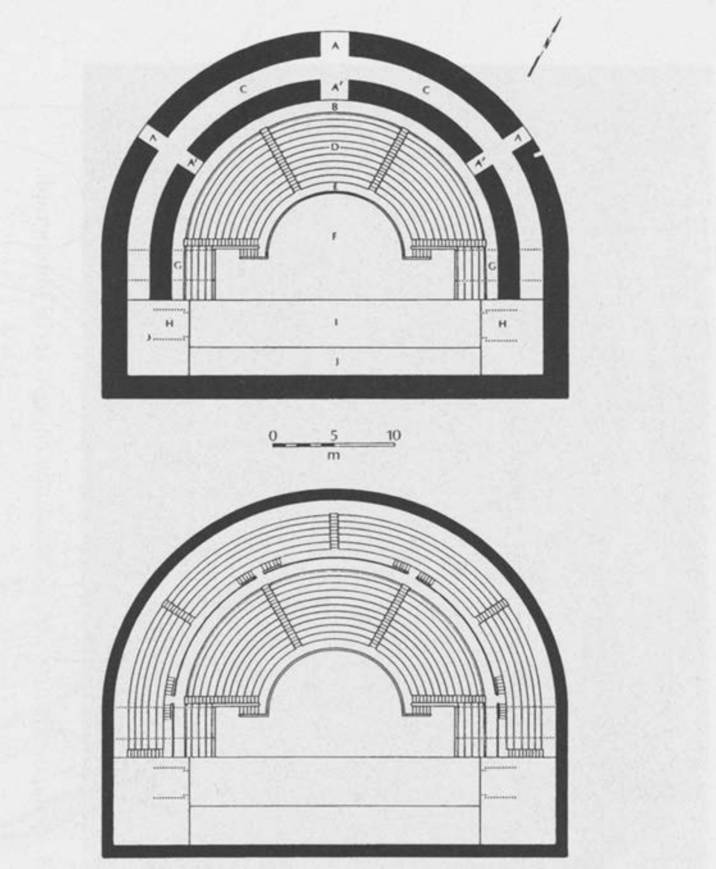


62. Pella, general plan of the site. Note the location of the theatre.



63. Pella, the theatre and the Byzantine church, aerial photograph.

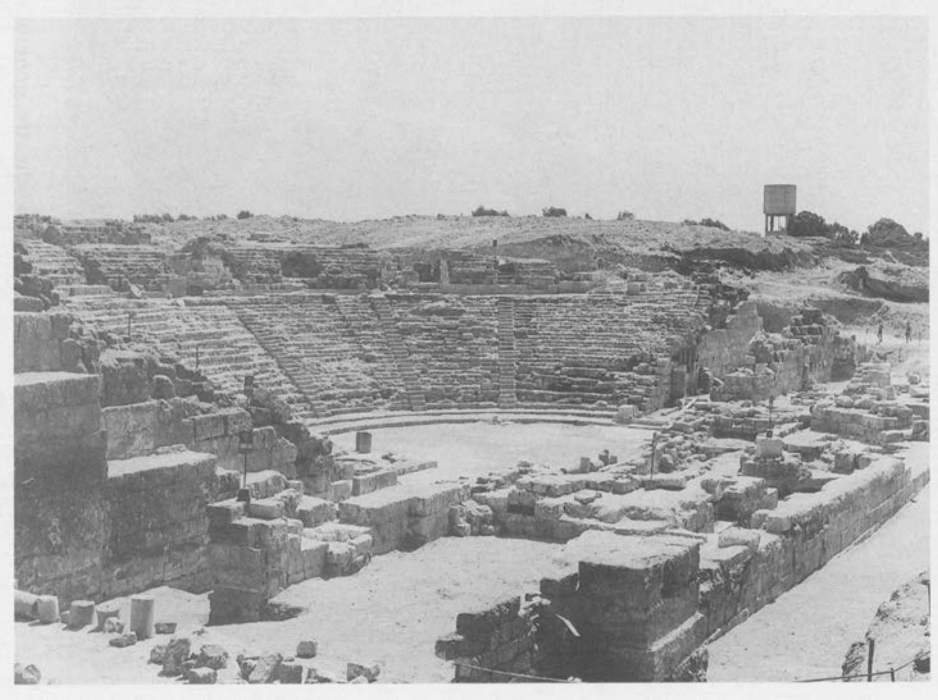
64. Pella, the theatre, aerial photograph.



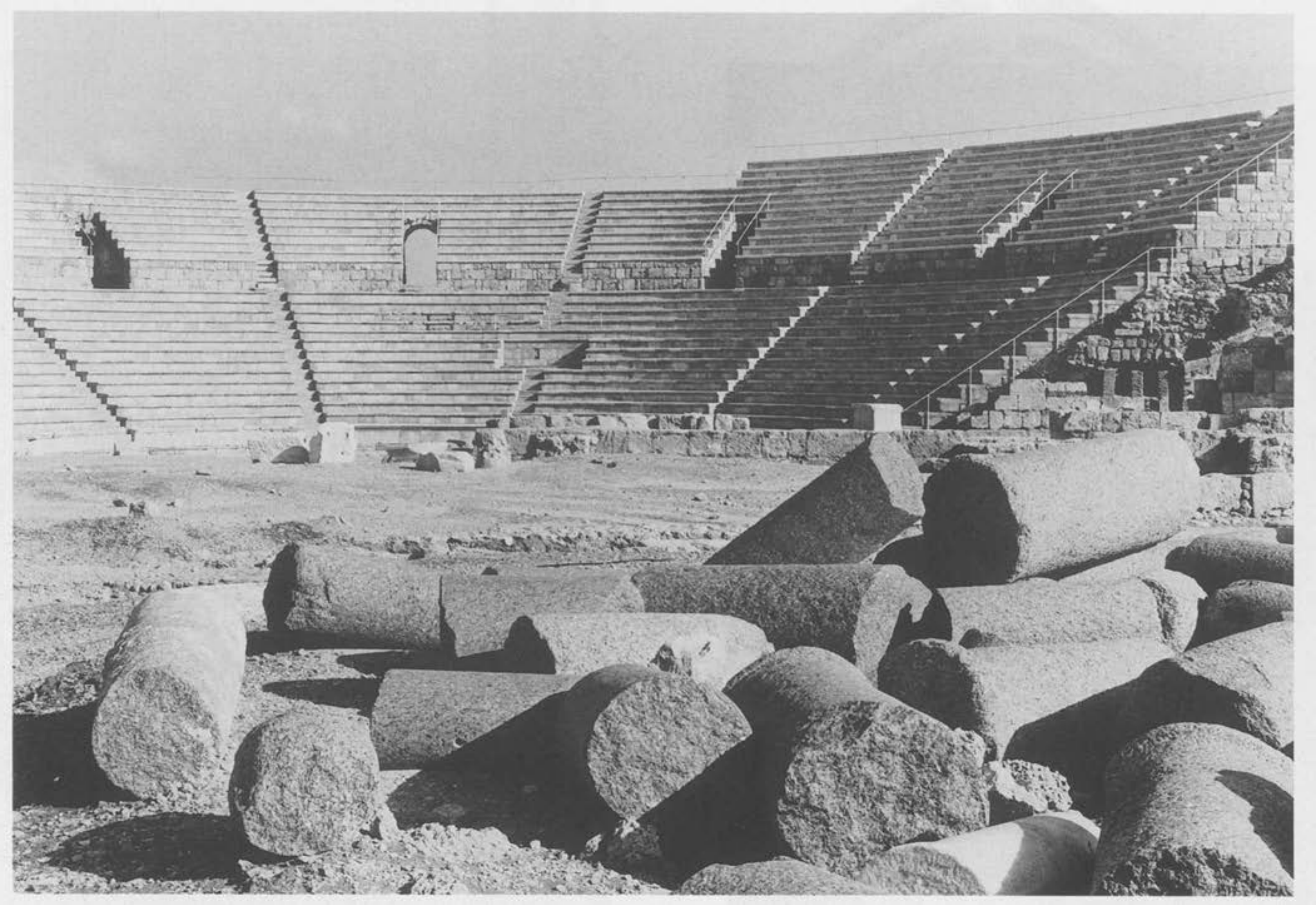
66. Pella, the theatre, the praecinctio level plan (above); the upper part of the cavea level plan (below).

←
65. Pella, the theatre, view of the cavea.

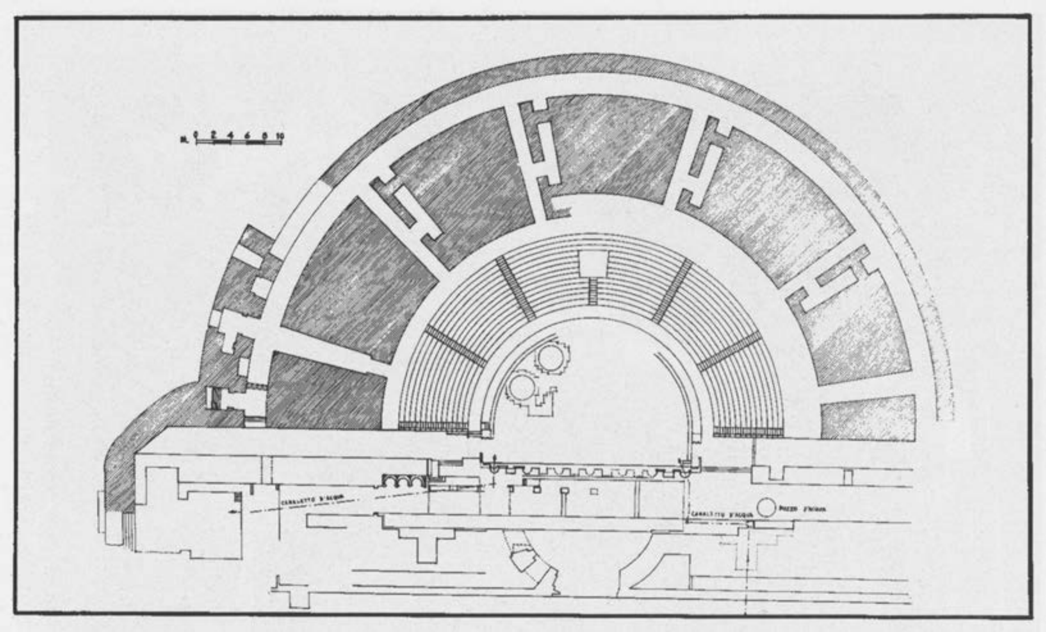
67. Caesarea, the theatre, aerial photograph.



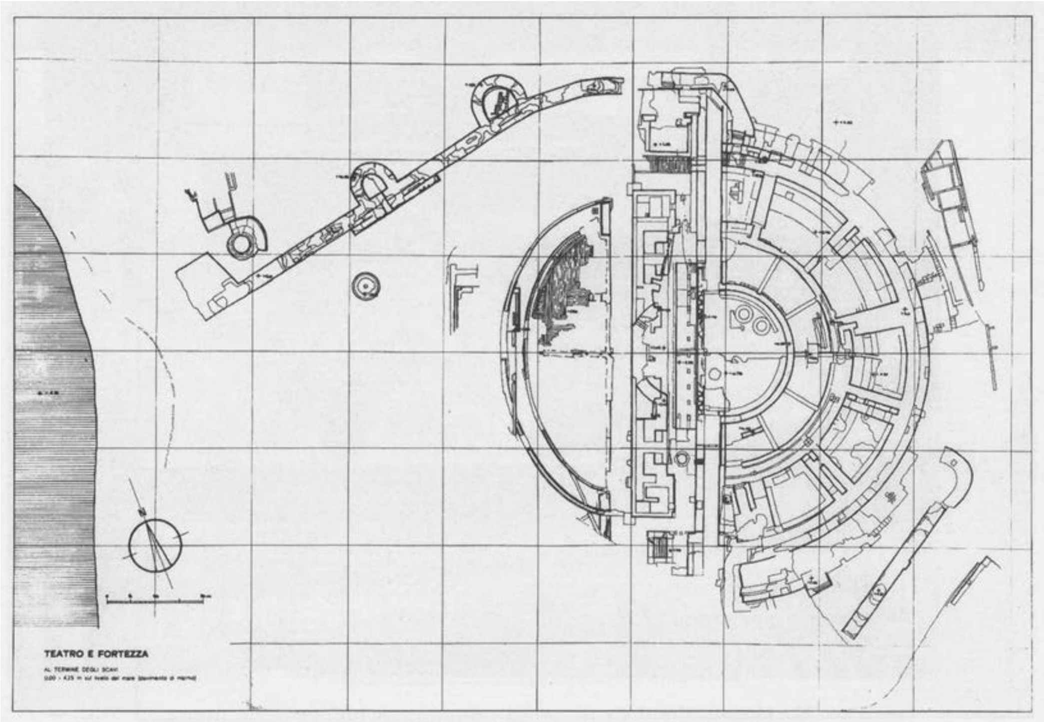
68. Caesarea, the theatre, general view of the cavea before restoration.



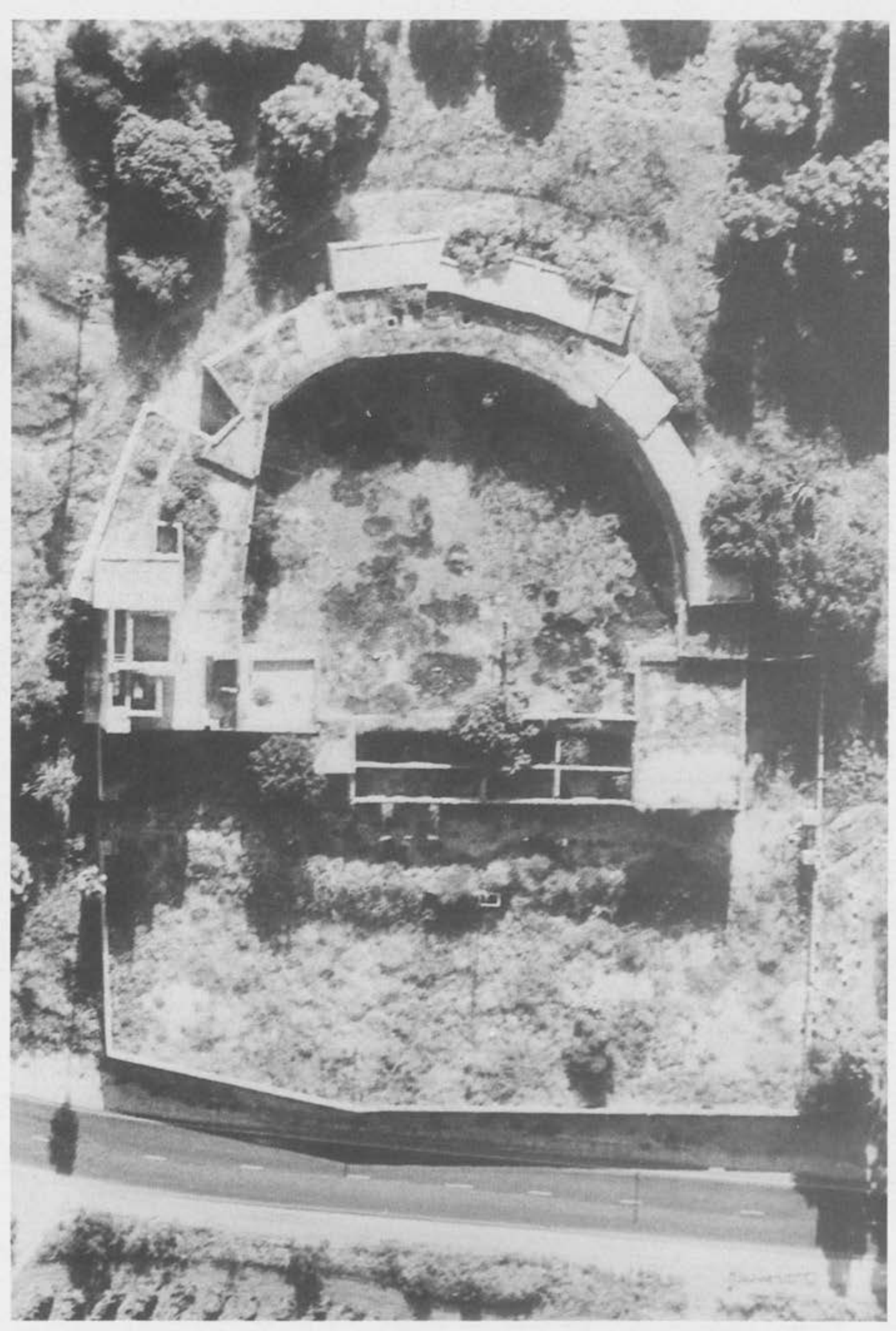
69. Caesarea, the theatre, general view of the cavea after restoration.



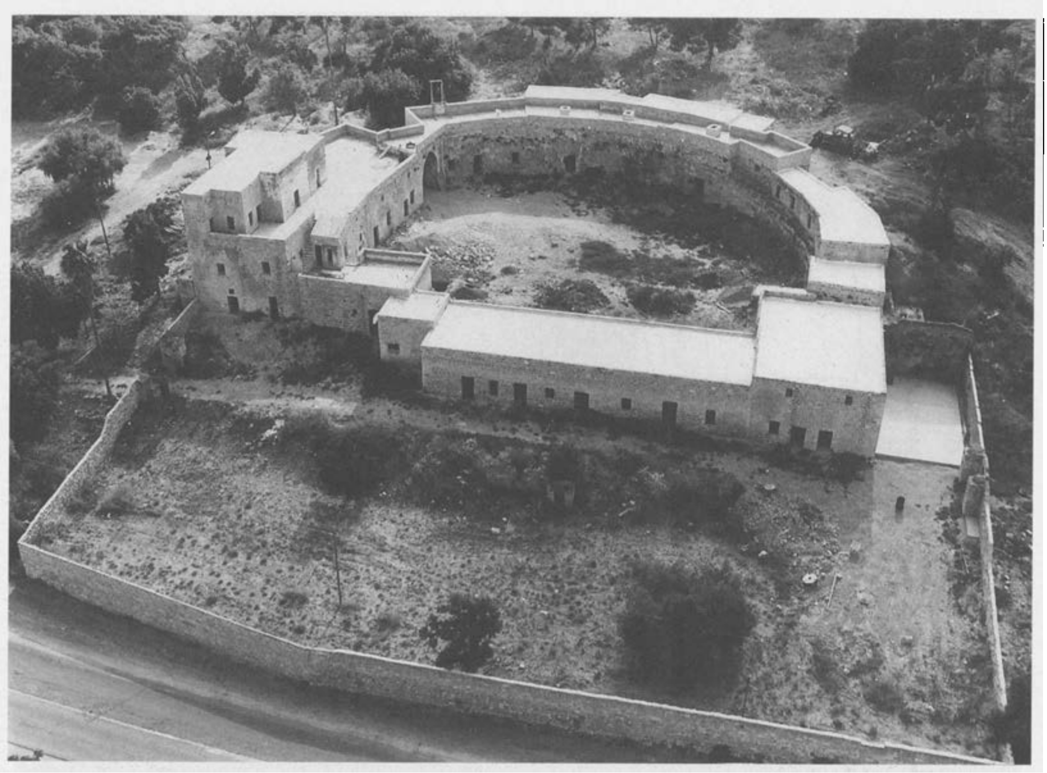
70. Caesarea, plan of the theatre.



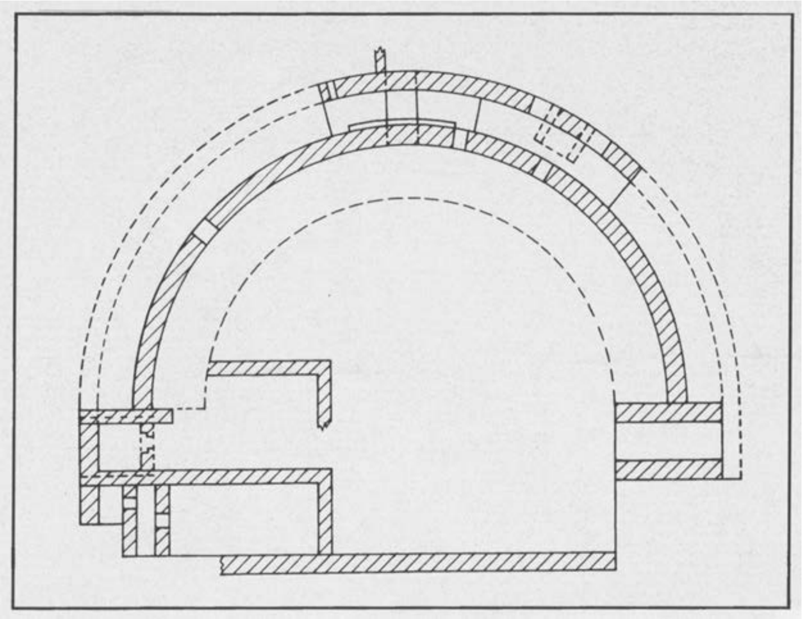
71. Caesarea, the theatre, and the Byzantine fortress, plan.



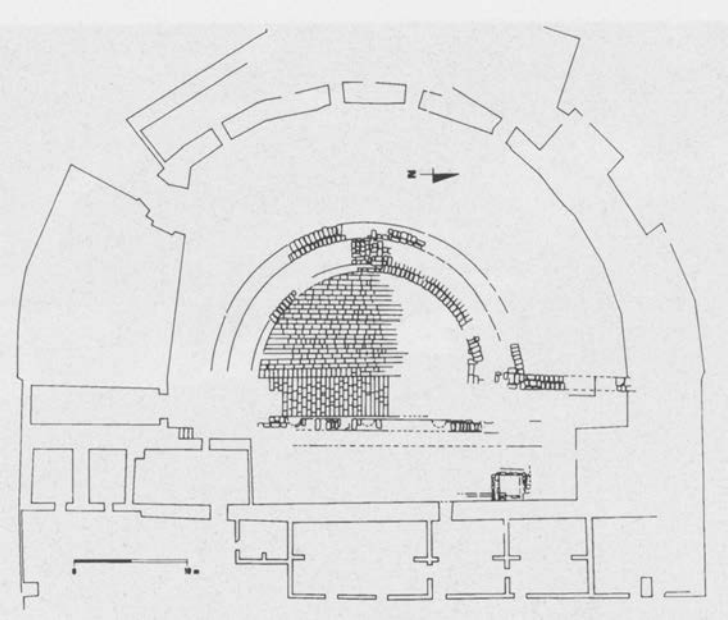
72. Shumi, the theatre, aerial photograph before excavations.



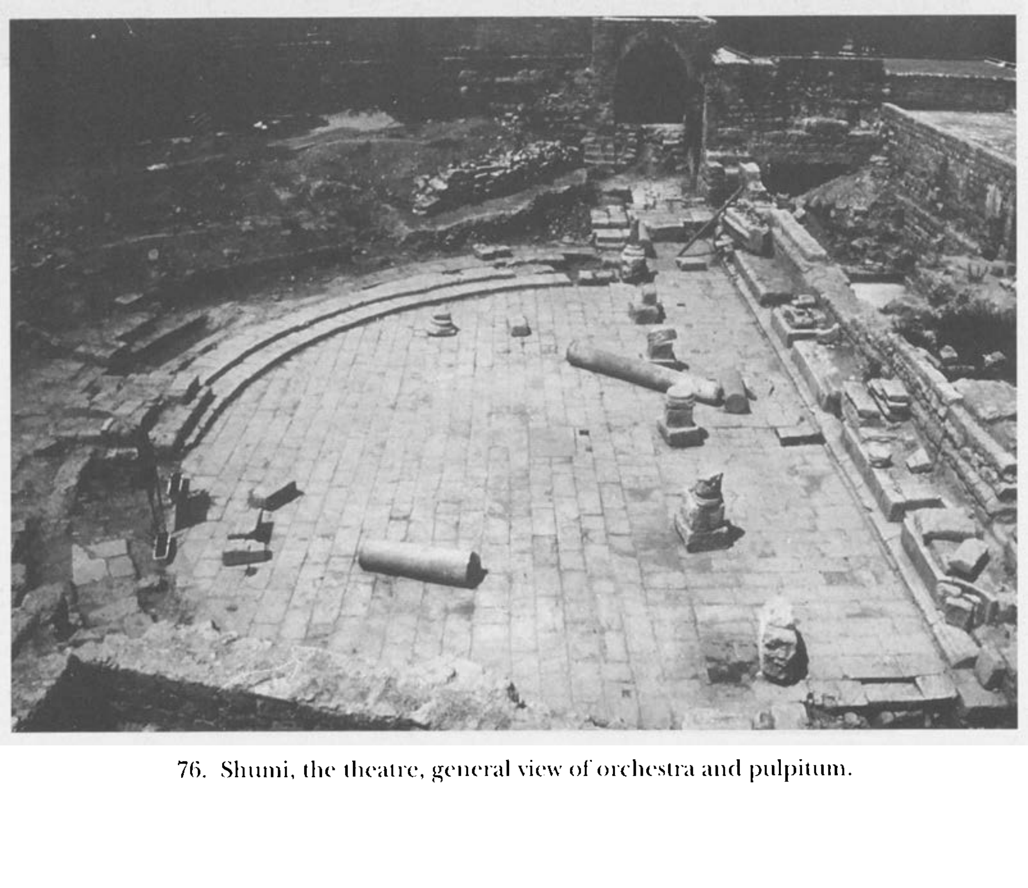
73. Shumi, the theatre, aerial photograph at the start of excavations.



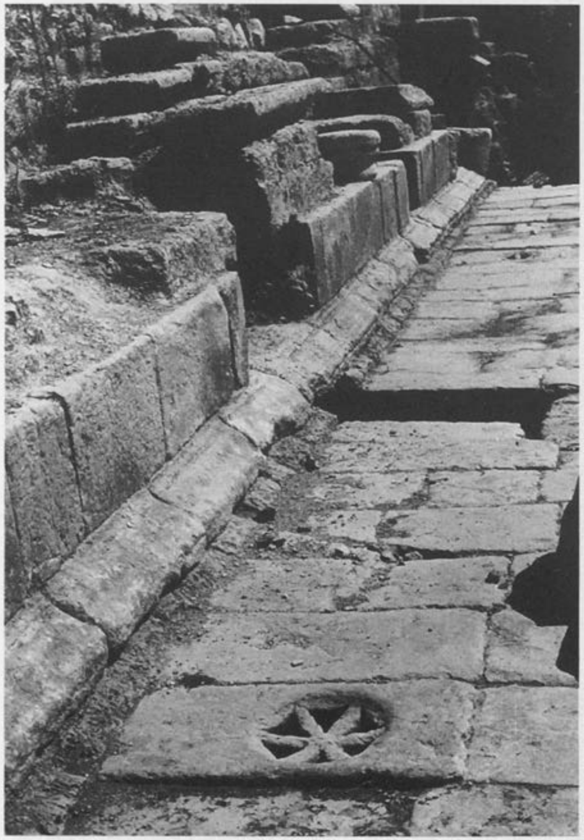
74. Shumi, the theatre, schematic plan.



75. Shumi, plan of the theatre.

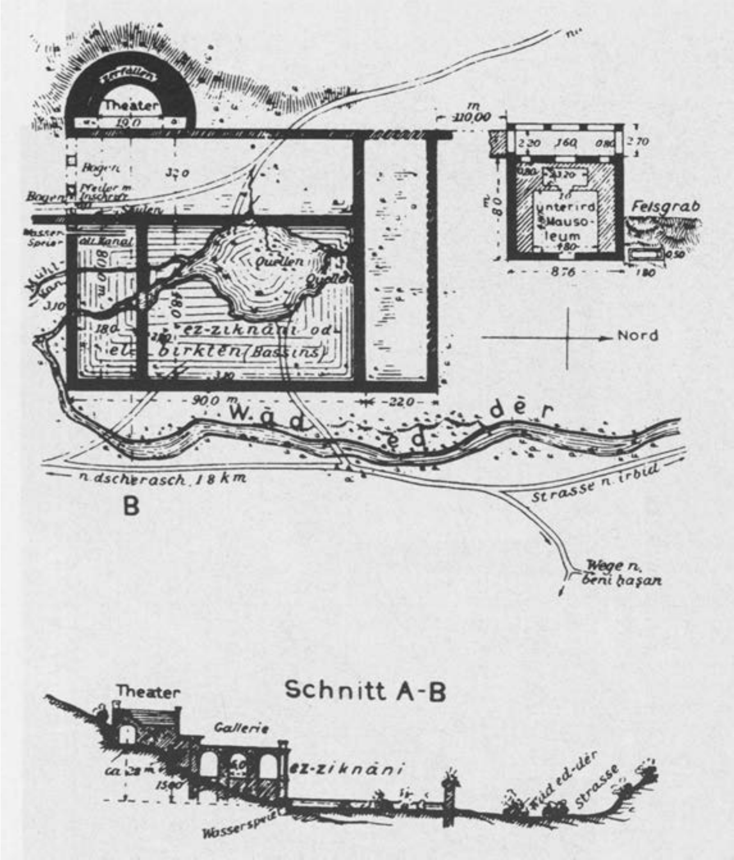


76. Shumi, the theatre, general view of orchestra and pulpitum.

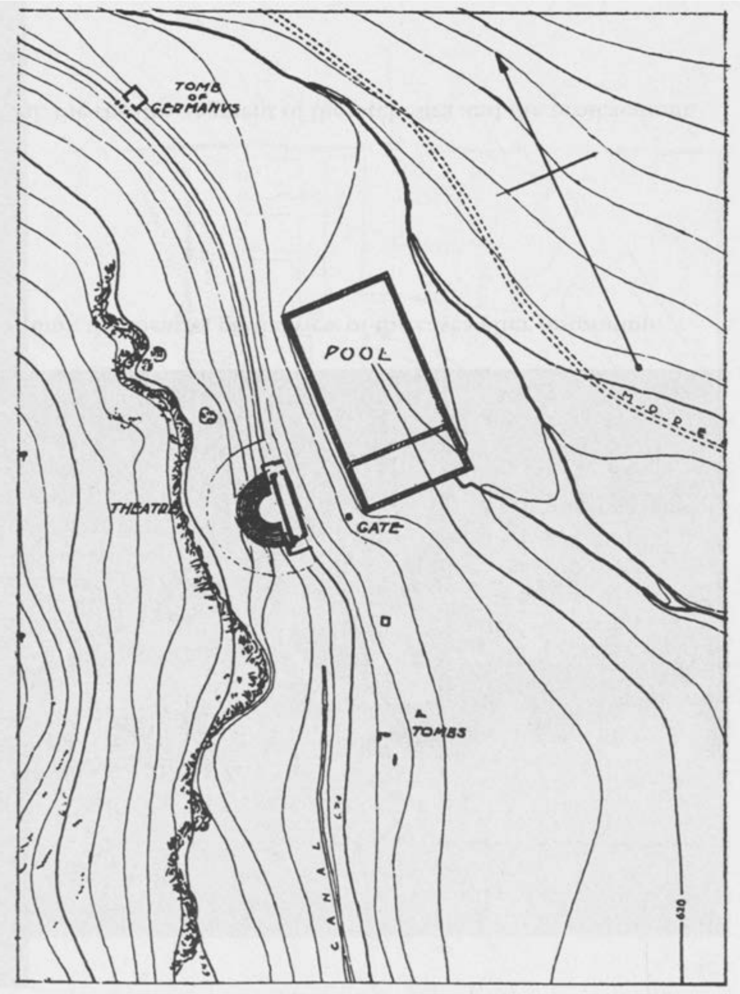


78. Shumi, the theatre, partial view of the cavea after restoration.

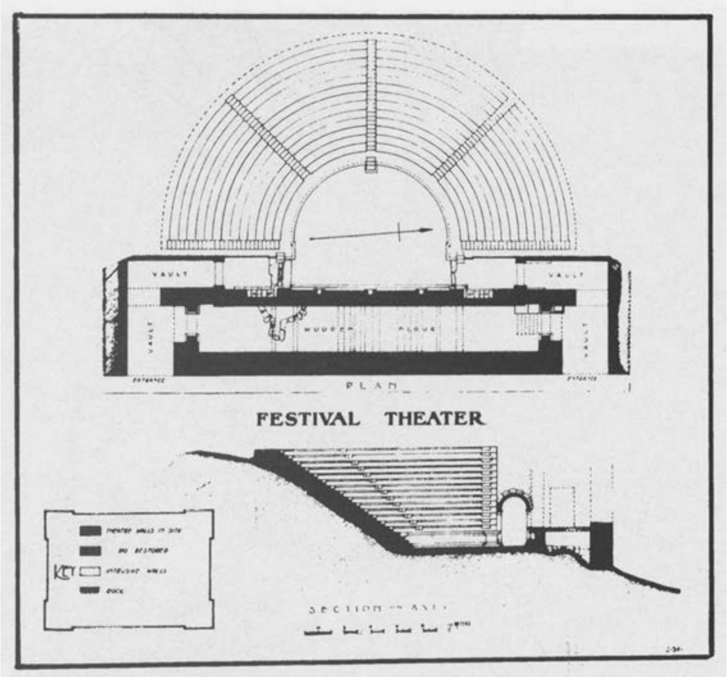
← 77. Shumi, the theatre, segment of the orchestra and the proscaenium.



79. Birketein, the theatre and the pool, plan and section.



80. Birketein, the theatre and the pool, plan. →



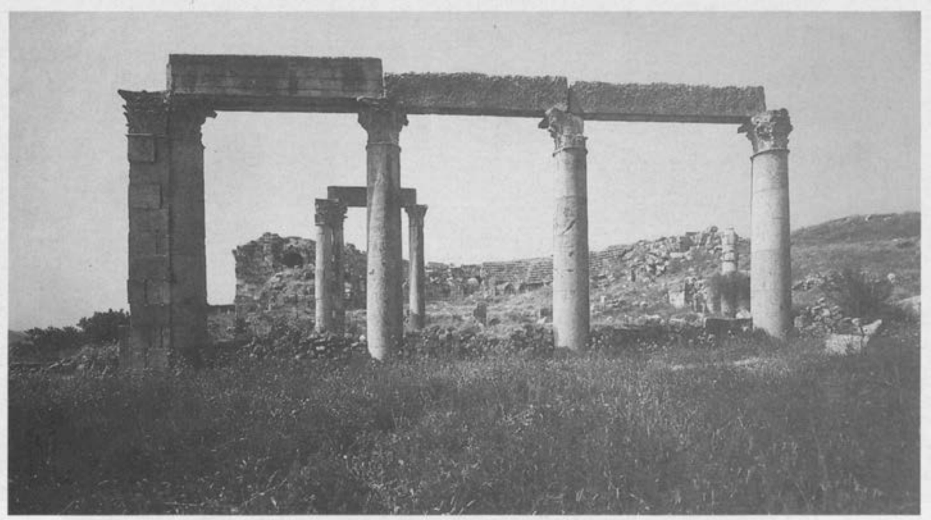
81. Birketein, plan of the theatre.

82. Birketein, the pool and the theatre, general view.

83. Birketein, the theatre, general view of the northern aditus maximus. Note the wall surrounding the orchestra.

84. Gerasa, the northern part of the city, aerial photograph.

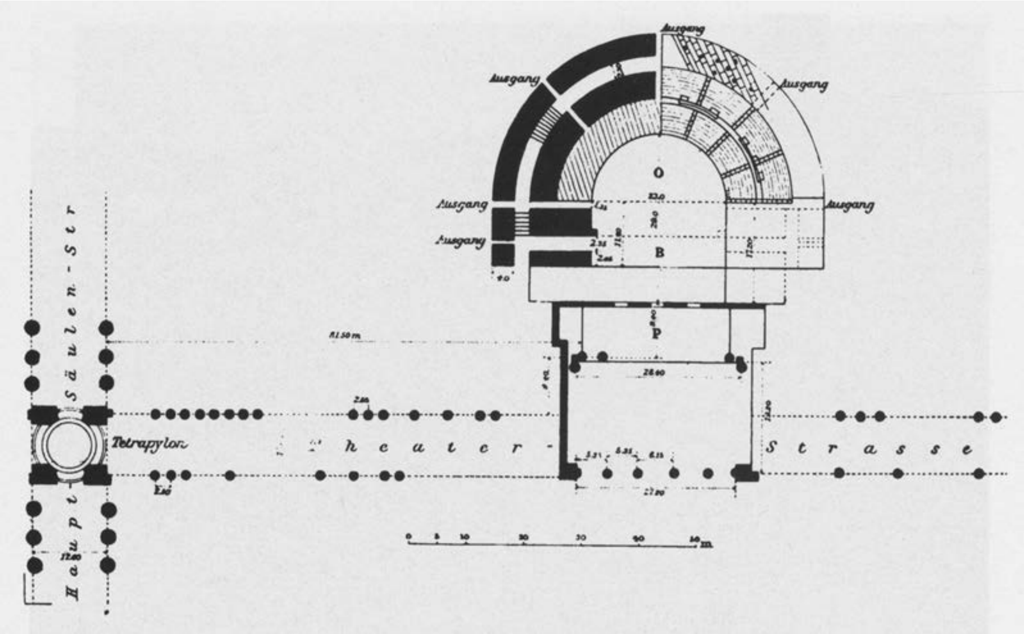
85. Gerasa, aerial photograph. Note the location of the two theatres.



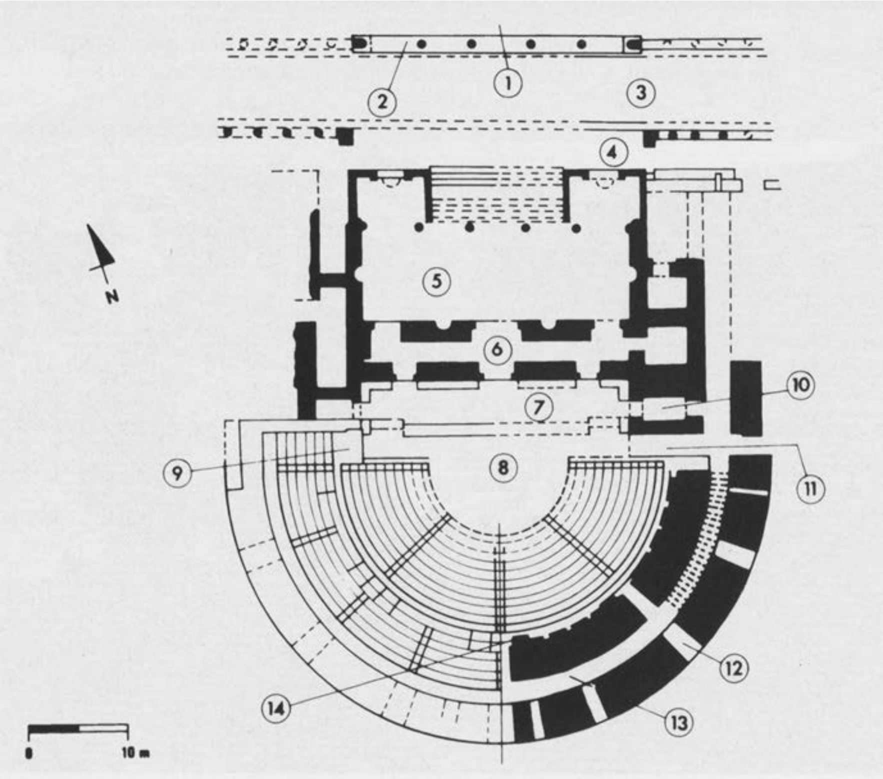
86. Gerasa, the north theatre, view to the south.

87. Gerasa, the north theatre, general view of the cavea. Note the ambulacrum and the praecinctio wall decorated with square and semicircular niches.

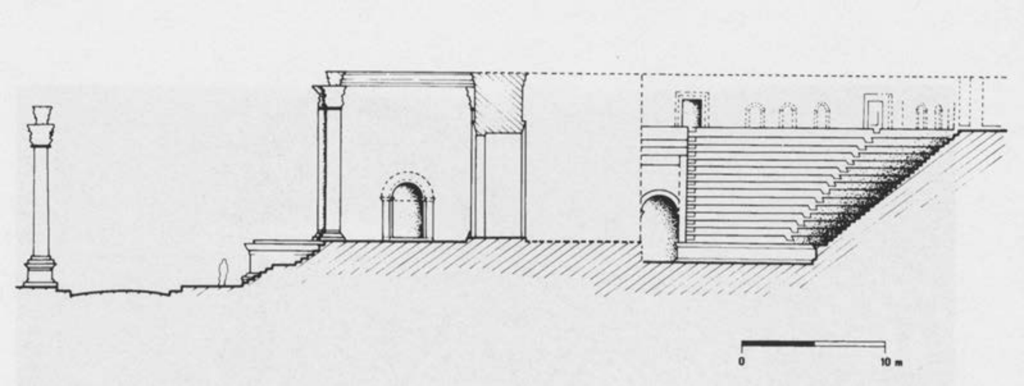
88. Gerasa, the north theatre, general view of the cavea, with the western aditus maximus and itinera versurarum clearly visible.



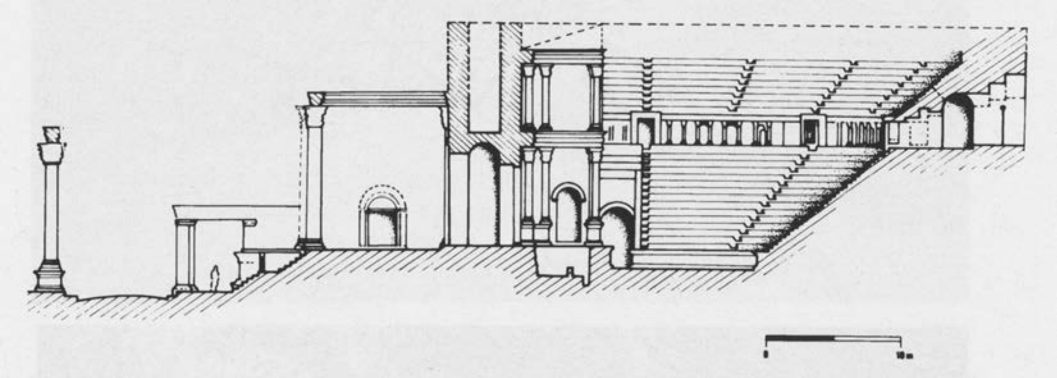
89. Gerasa, the north theatre, plan.



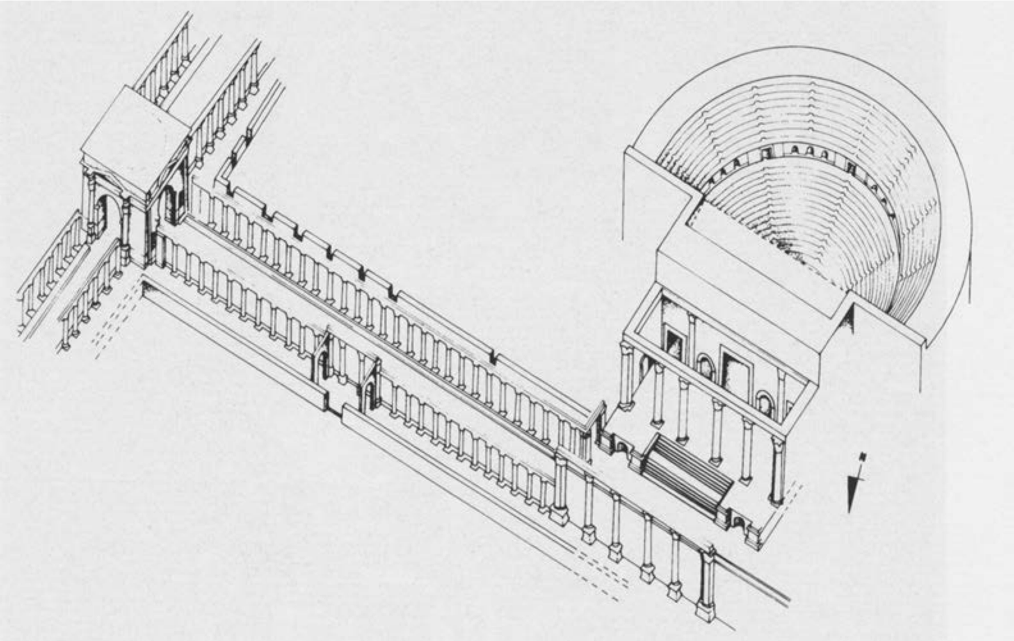
90. Gerasa, the north theatre, plan.



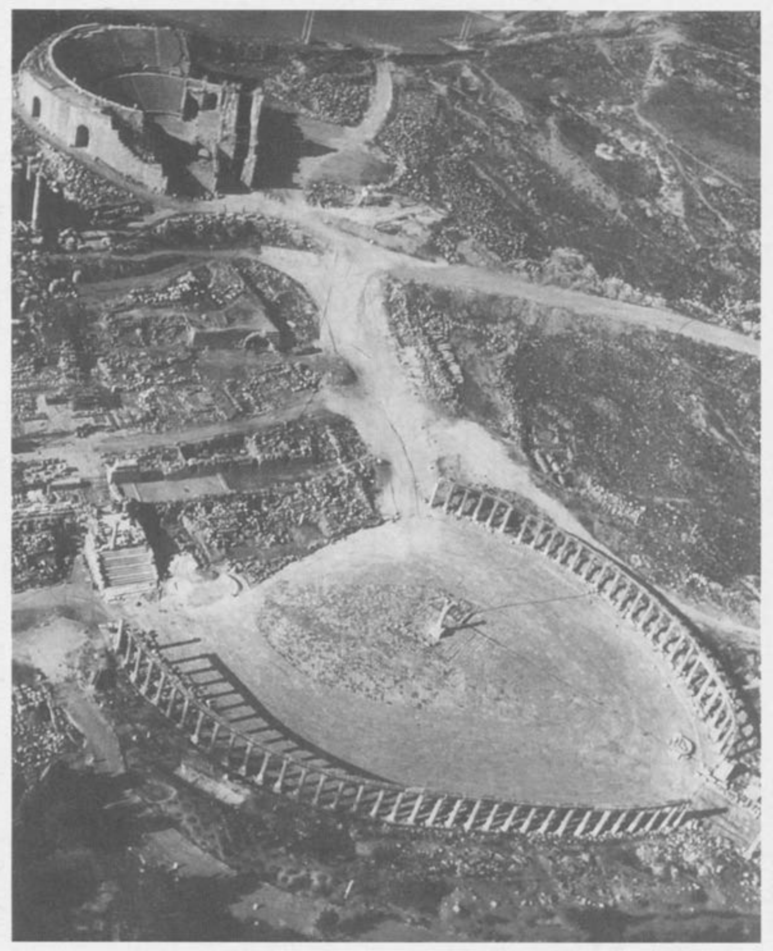
91. Gerasa, the north theatre, section from the early phase of the theatre.

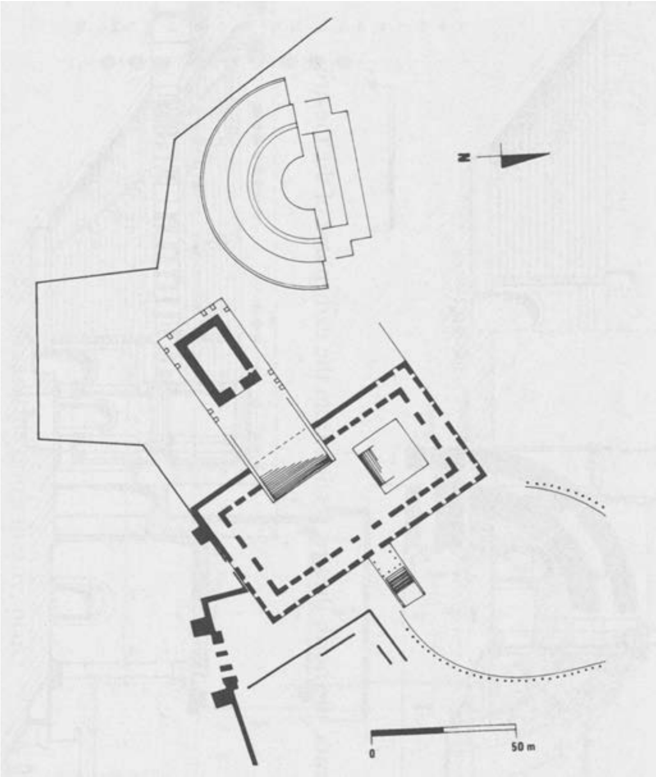


92. Gerasa, the north theatre, section from the later phase of the theater.



93. Gerasa, the north theatre, an isometric reconstruction of the theatre, the north decumanus and the postscaenium.

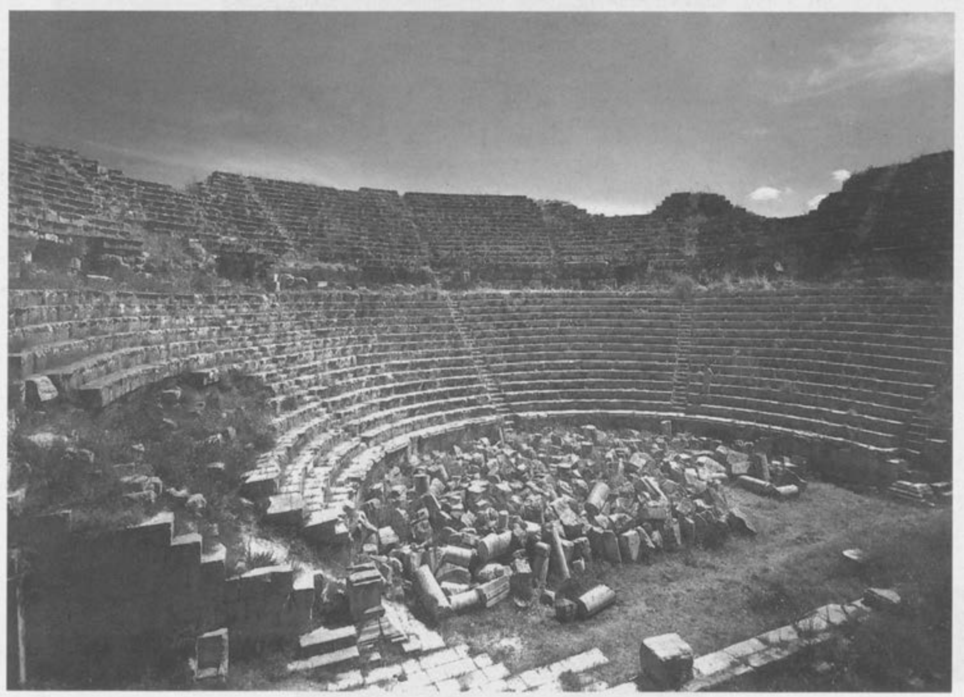




95. Gerasa, the south theatre, the sanctuary of Zeus and the oval plaza, general plan.

← 94. Gerasa, the south theatre, the sanctuary of Zeus and the oval plaza, aerial photograph.

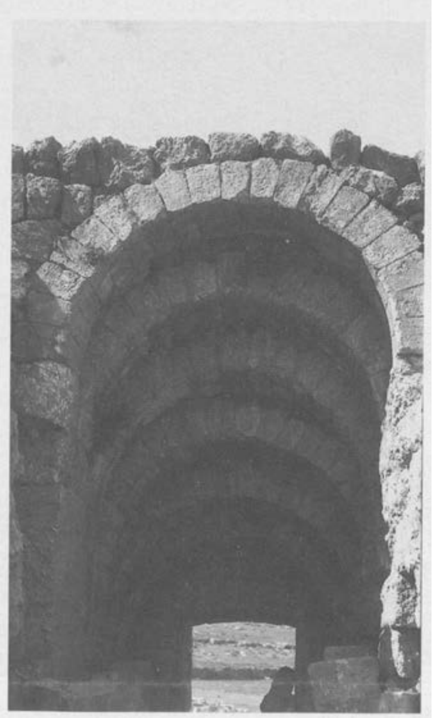
96. Gerasa, the south theatre, general view before restoration.



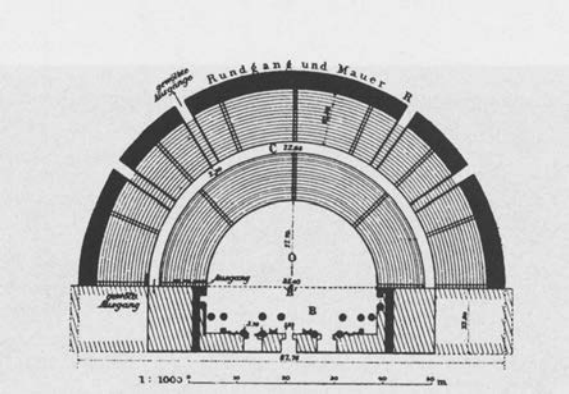
97. Gerasa, the south theatre, general view of the orchestra and the cavea before restoration.

98. Gerasa, the south theatre, the proscaenium, the pulpitum and the lower part of the scaenae frons after restoration.

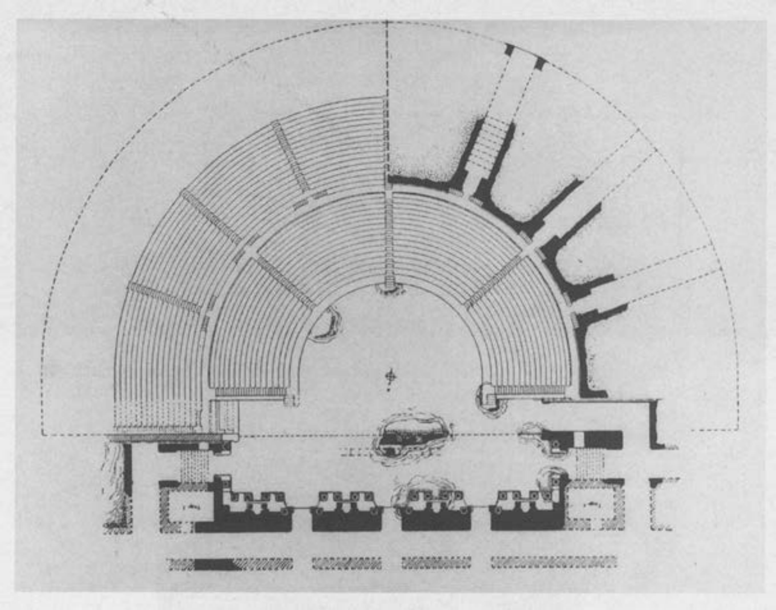
99. Gerasa, the south theatre, general view after restoration.

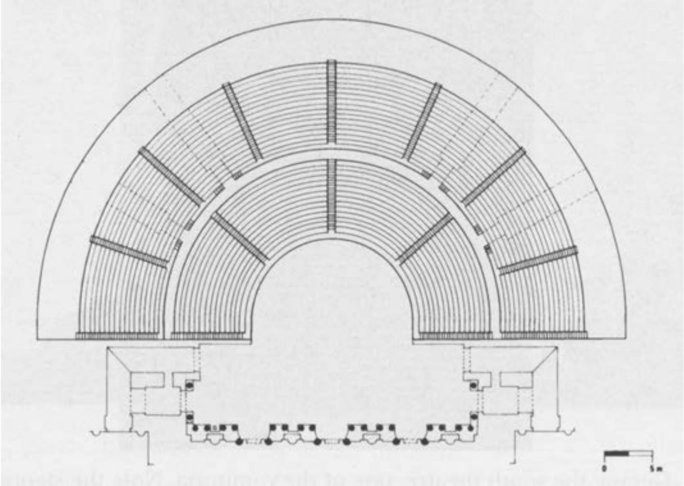


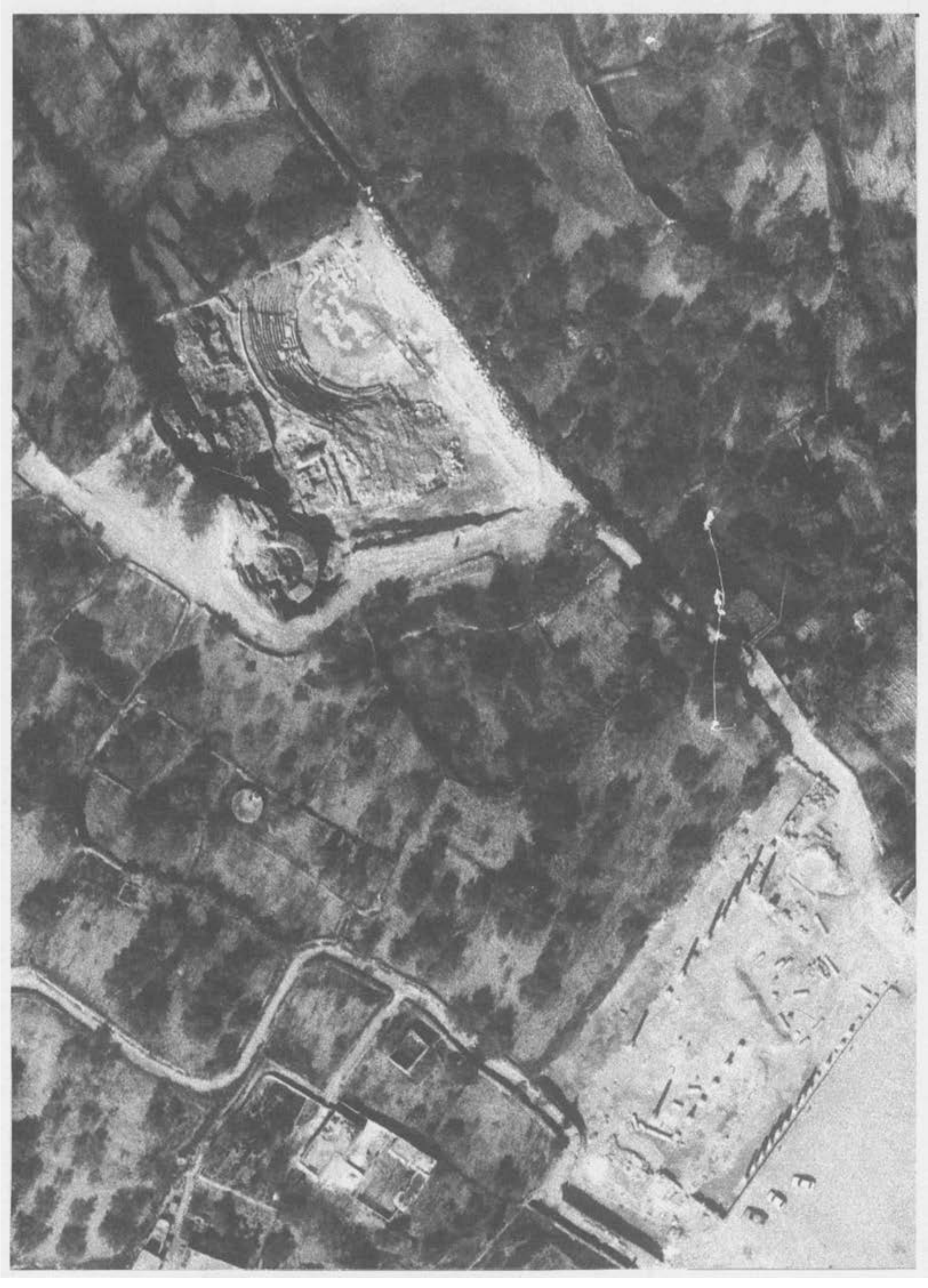
100. Gerasa, the south theatre, one of the vomitoria. Note the stepped vault.



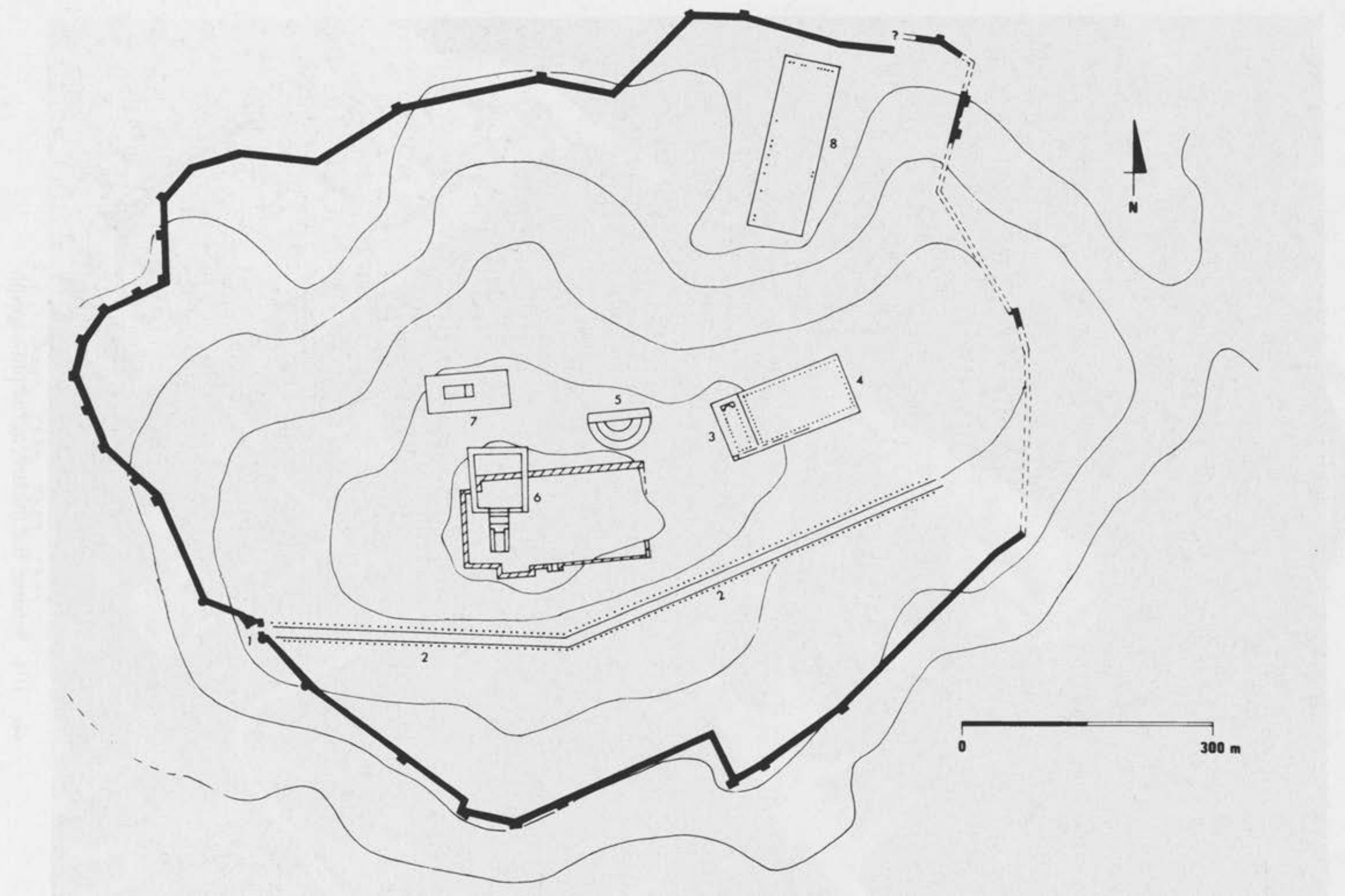
101. Gerasa, the south theatre, plan.


102. Gerasa, the south theatre, plan.

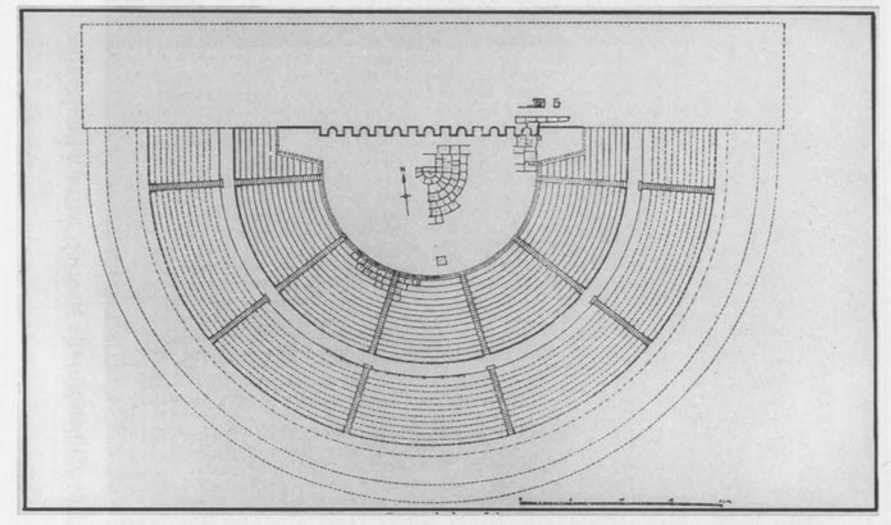

103. Gerasa, the south theatre, plan.



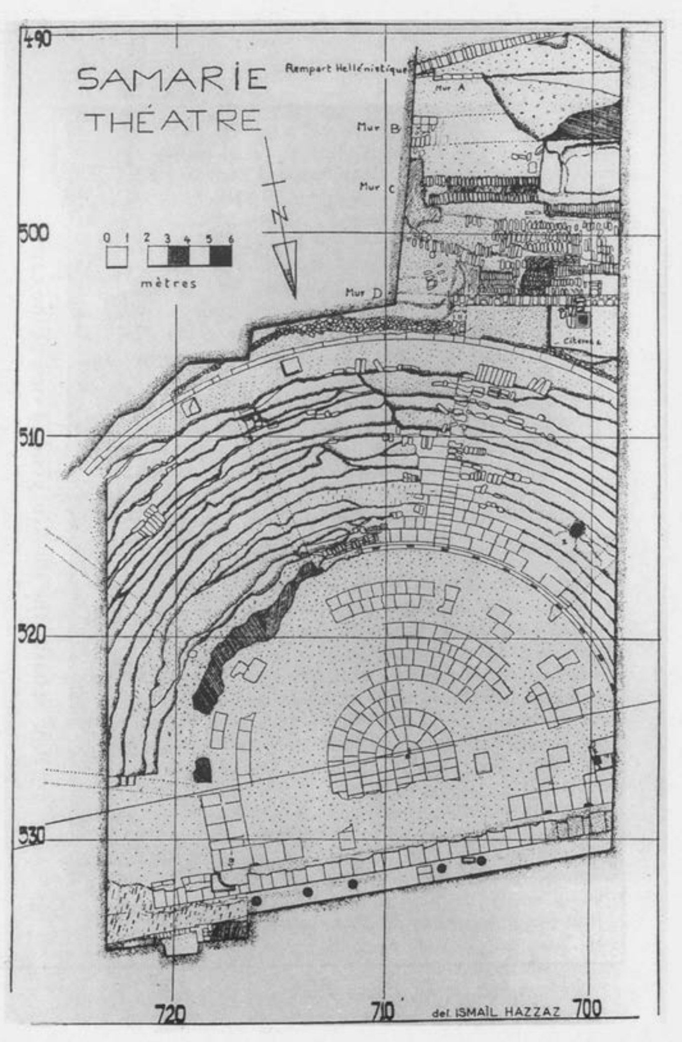
104. Sebaste, the theatre, aerial photograph.



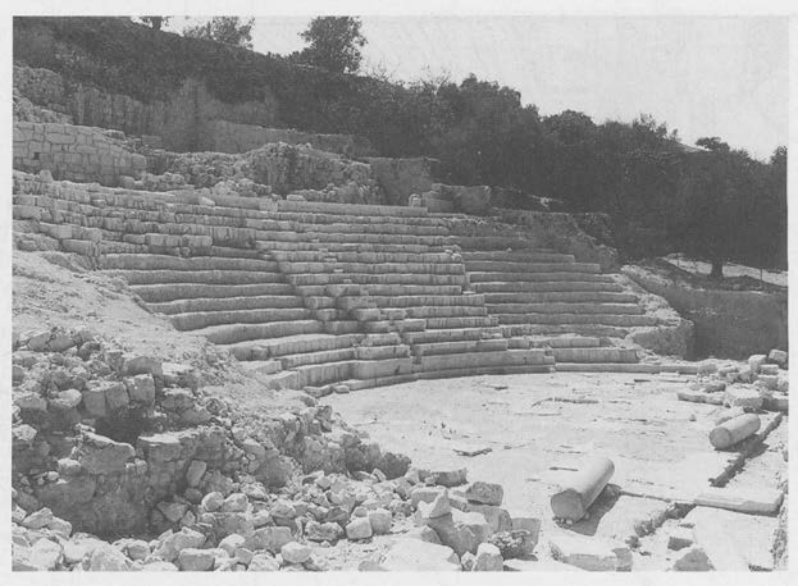
105. Sebaste, city plan. Note the location of the theatre.



106. Sebaste, plan of the theatre.

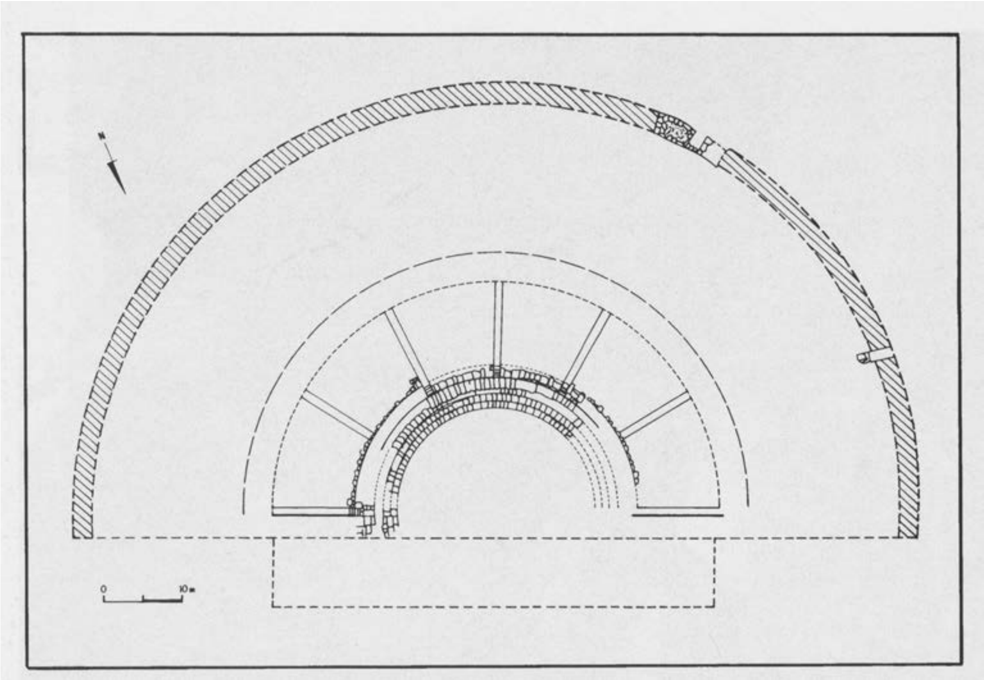


107. Sebaste, plan of the theatre. →



108. Sebaste, the theatre, general view of the cavea.

109. Shechem, the theatre, aerial photograph.

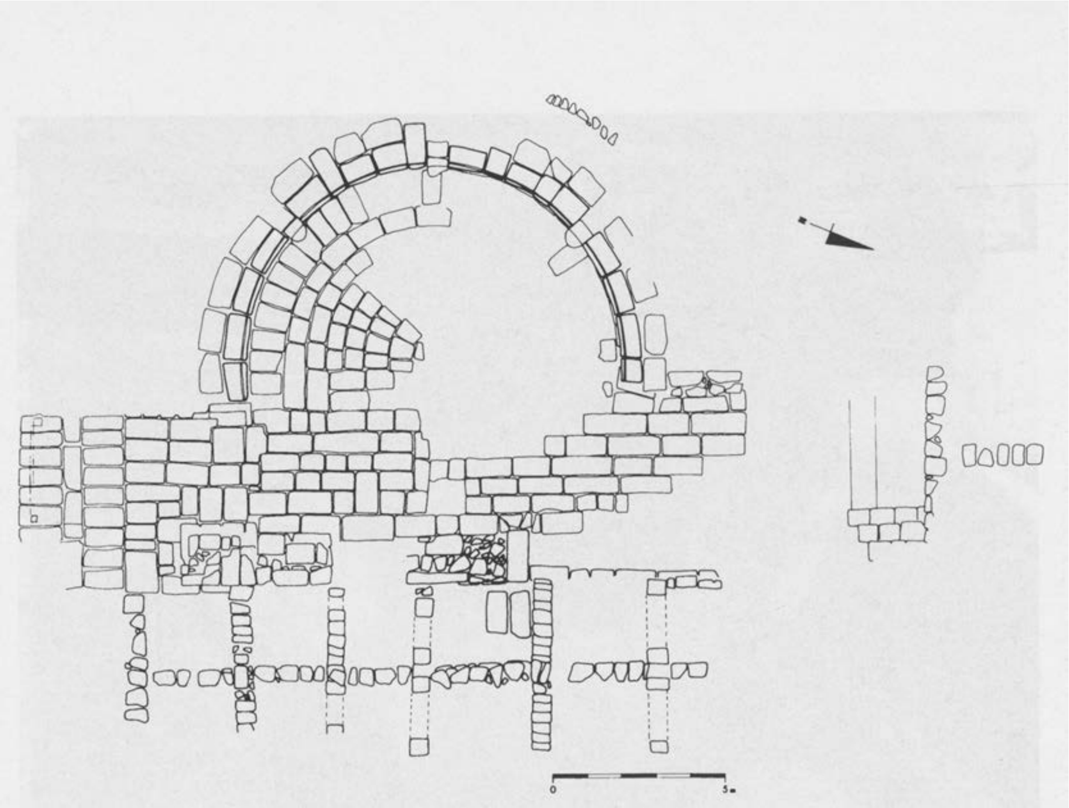


110. Shechem, plan of the theatre.

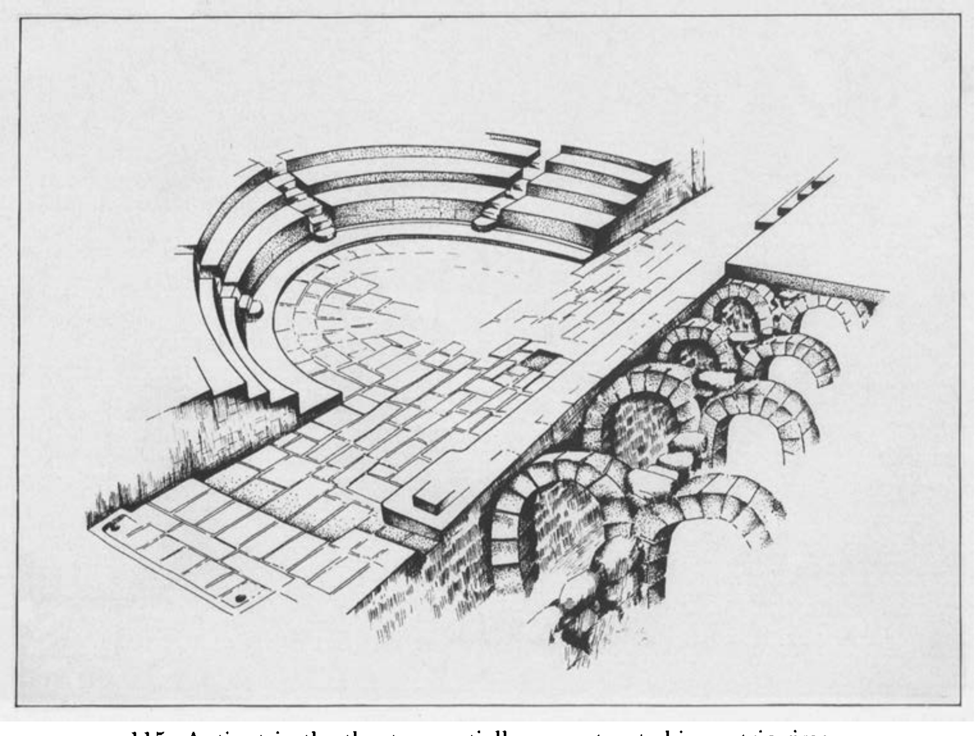
111. Shechem, the theatre, general view of orchestra and cavea.

112. Shechem, the theatre, lower part of the ima cavea.

113. Shechem, the theatre, one of the seats of honour decorated with dolphin-like reliefs.

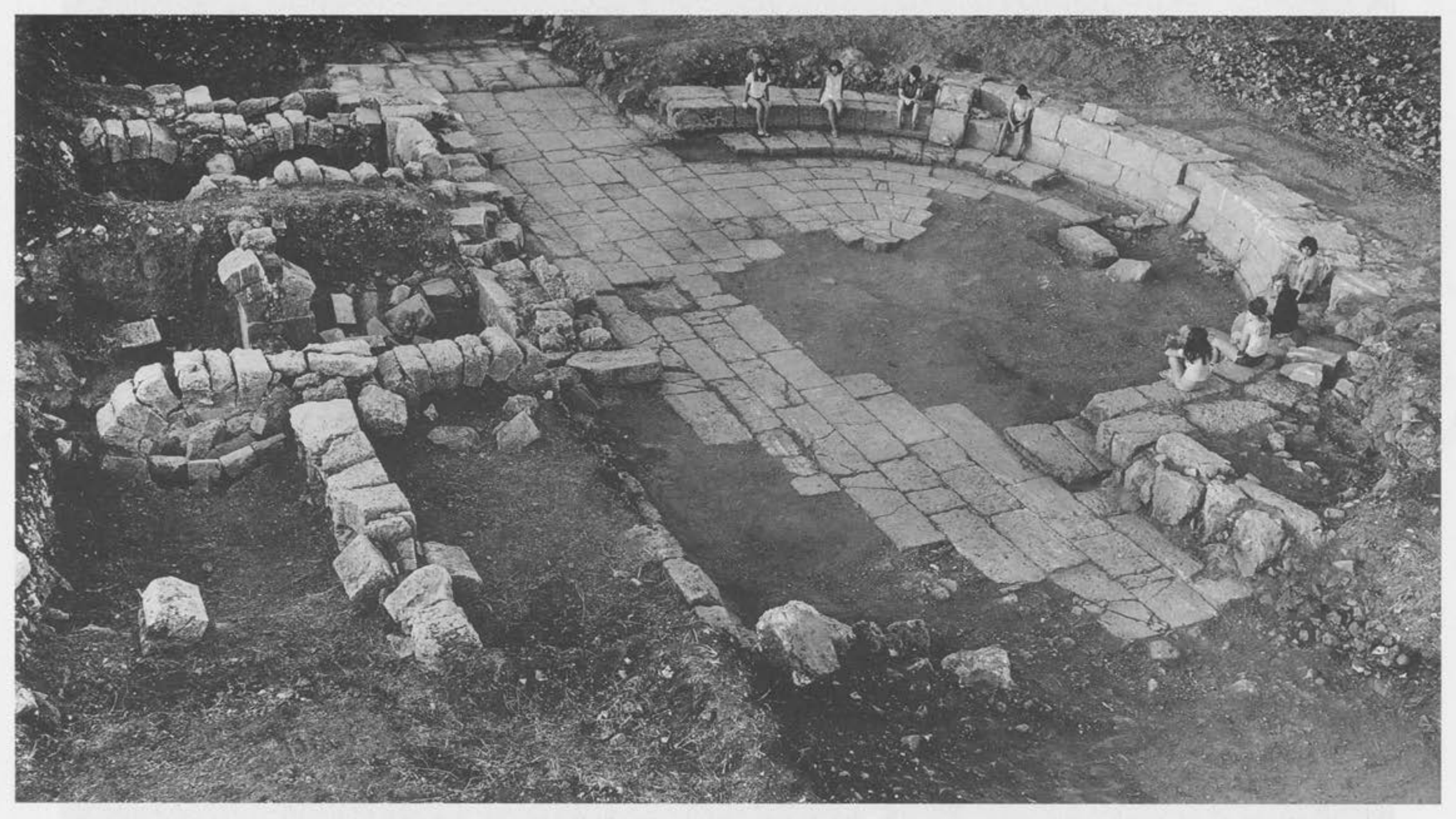


114. Antipatris, plan of the theatre.

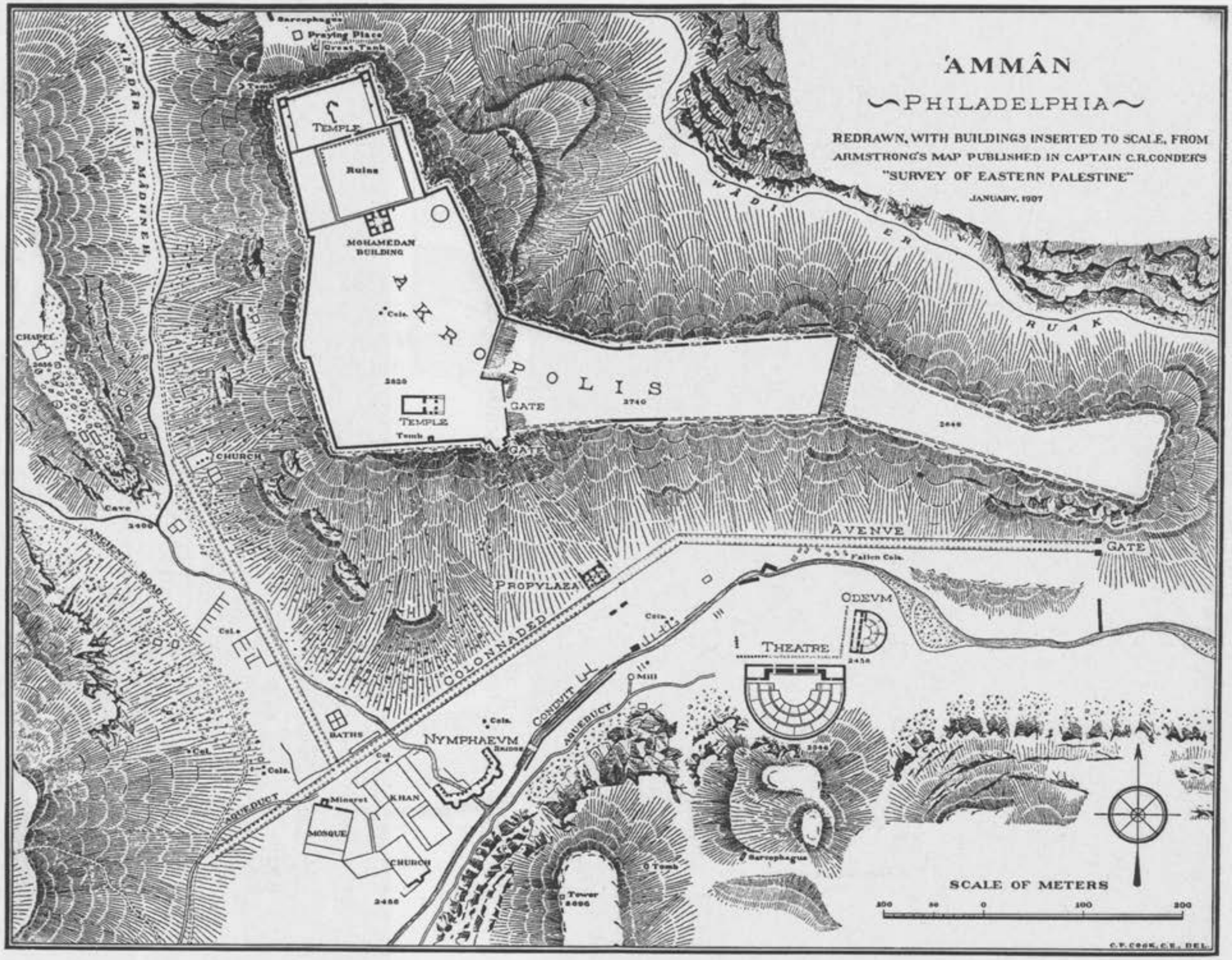


115. Antipatris, the theatre, partially reconstructed isometric view.

116. Antipatris, the theatre, general view of orchestra, cavea and hyposcaenium.

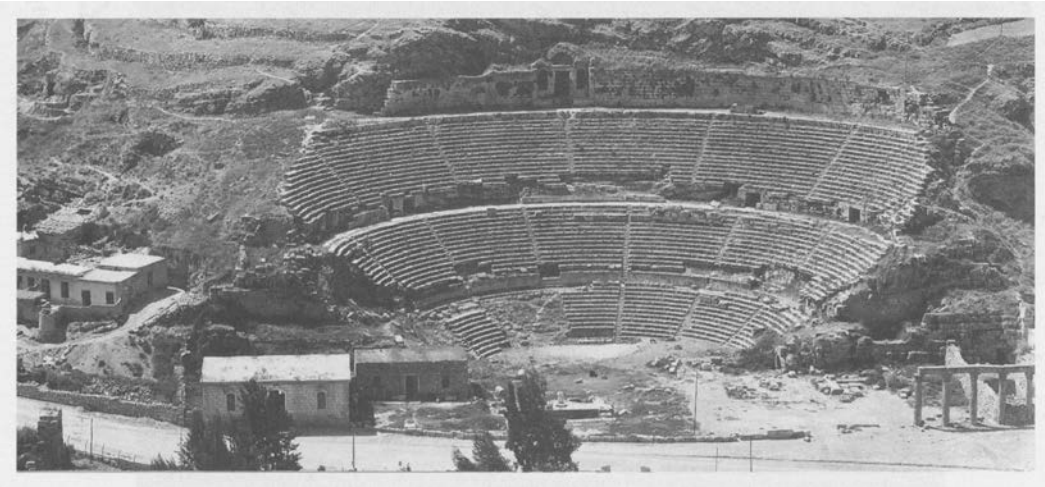


117. Antipatris, the theatre, general view of orchestra and cavea.

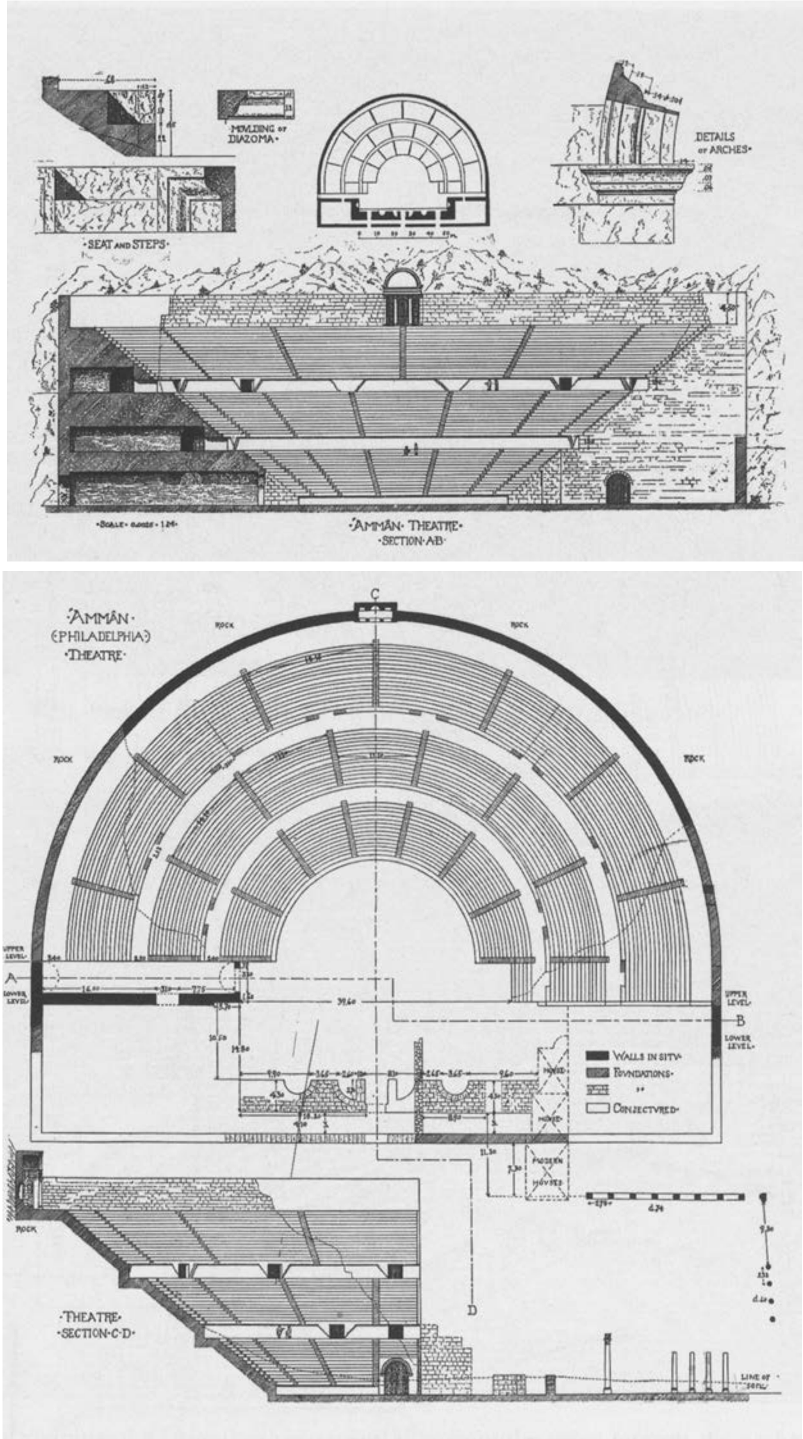


118. Philadelphia, city-plan. Note the location of the two theatres.

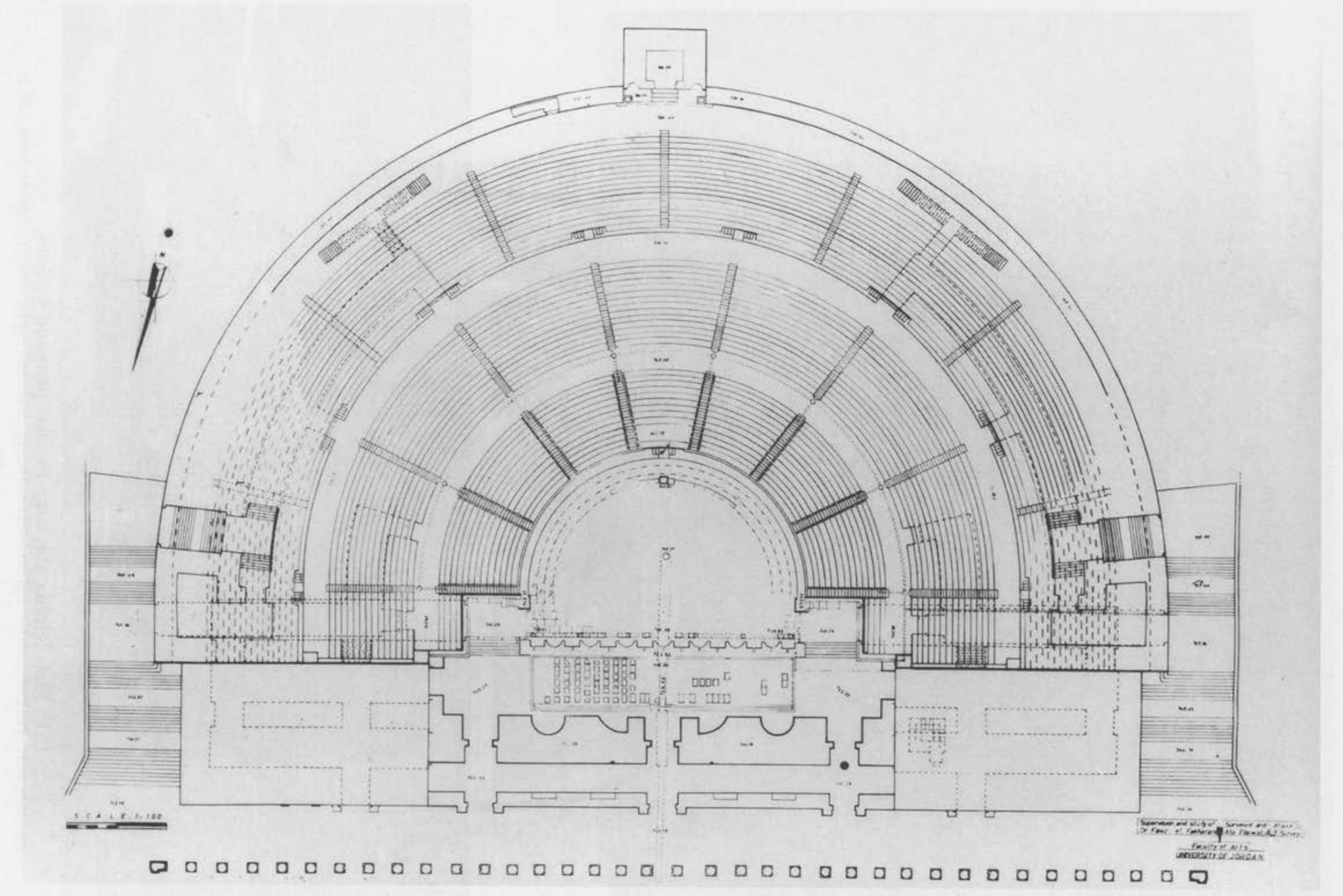
119. Philadelphia, the agora and the two theatres, view from the acropolis.



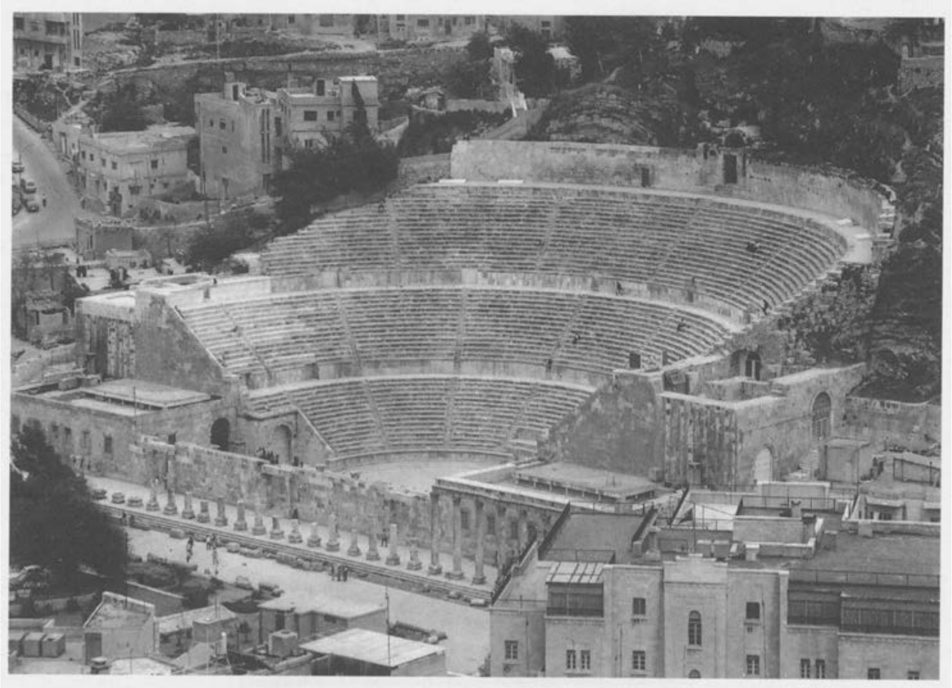
120. Philadelphia, the large theatre, general view of the cavea, before restoration.



121. Philadelphia, the large theatre, plan and sections.

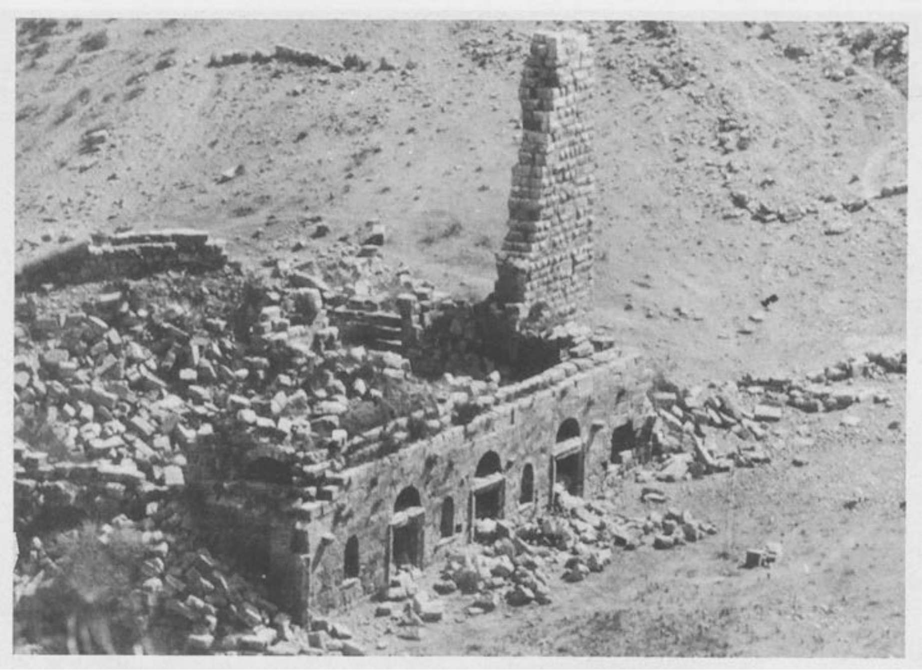


122. Philadelphia, the large theatre, plan.

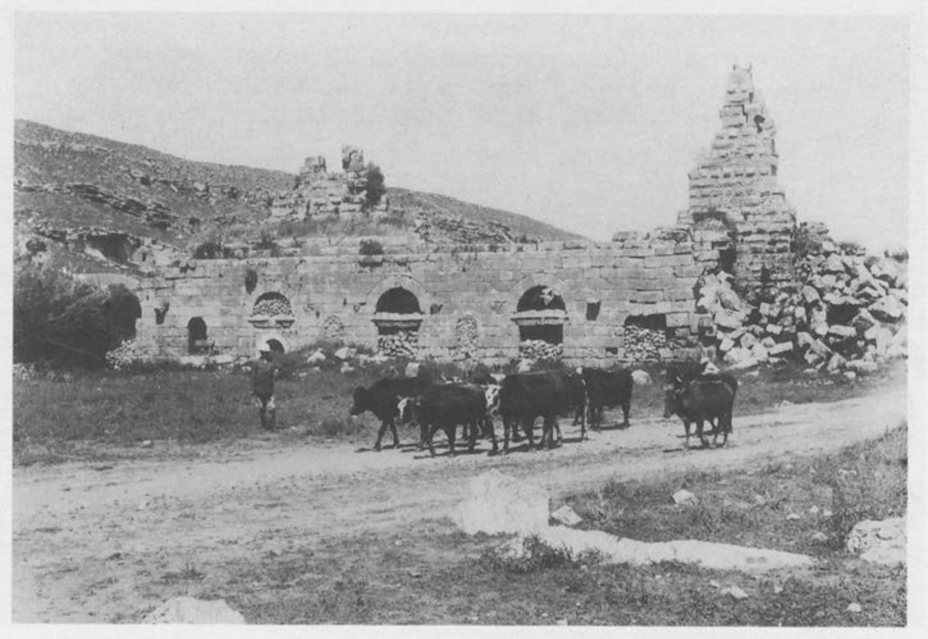


123. Philadelphia, the large theatre, general view after restoration.

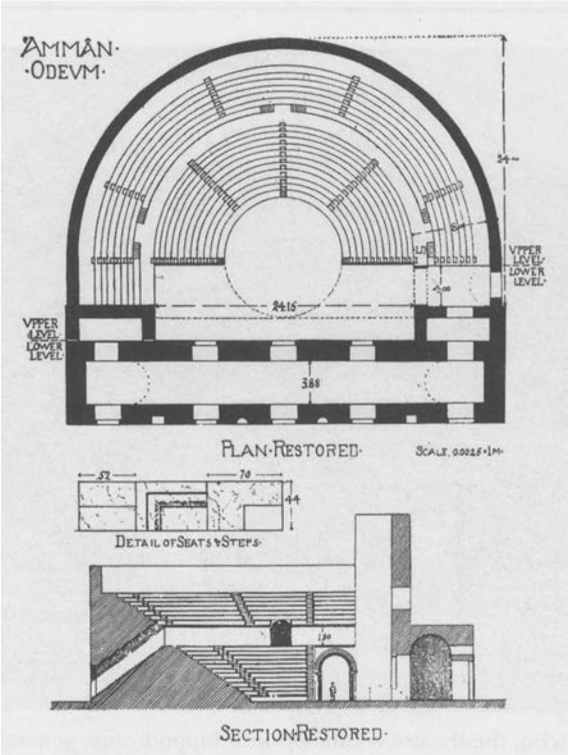
124. Philadelphia, the large theatre, general view from the cavea towards the orchestra and the pulpitum.



125. Philadelphia, the small theatre, general view as photographed at the beginning of the 20th century.

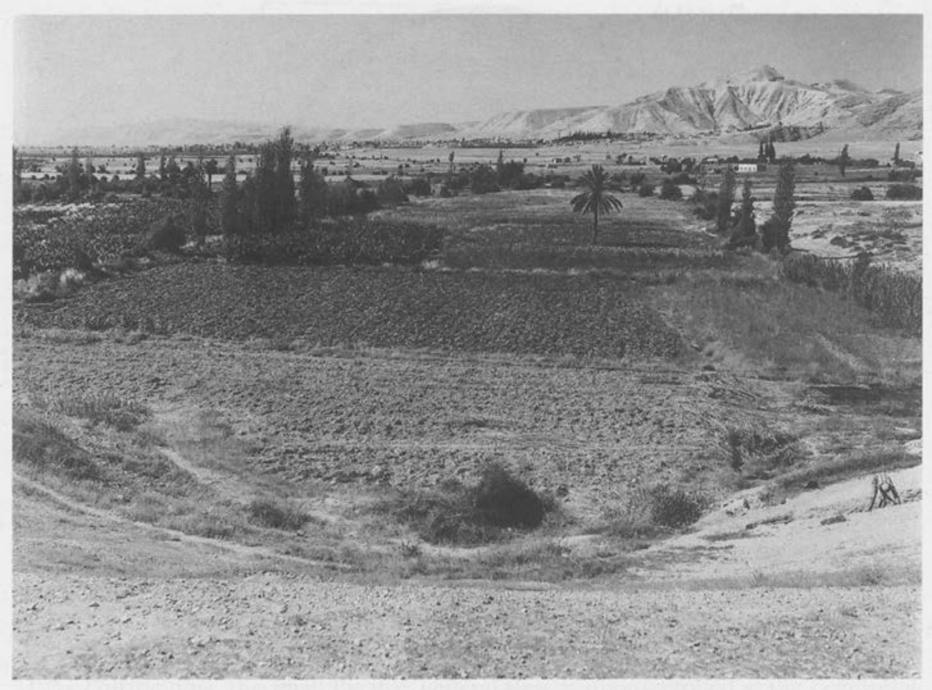


126. Philadelphia, the small theatre, the rear wall of the scaena. Note the five entrances and semicircular decorative niches between them. Photographed at the beginning of the 20th century.

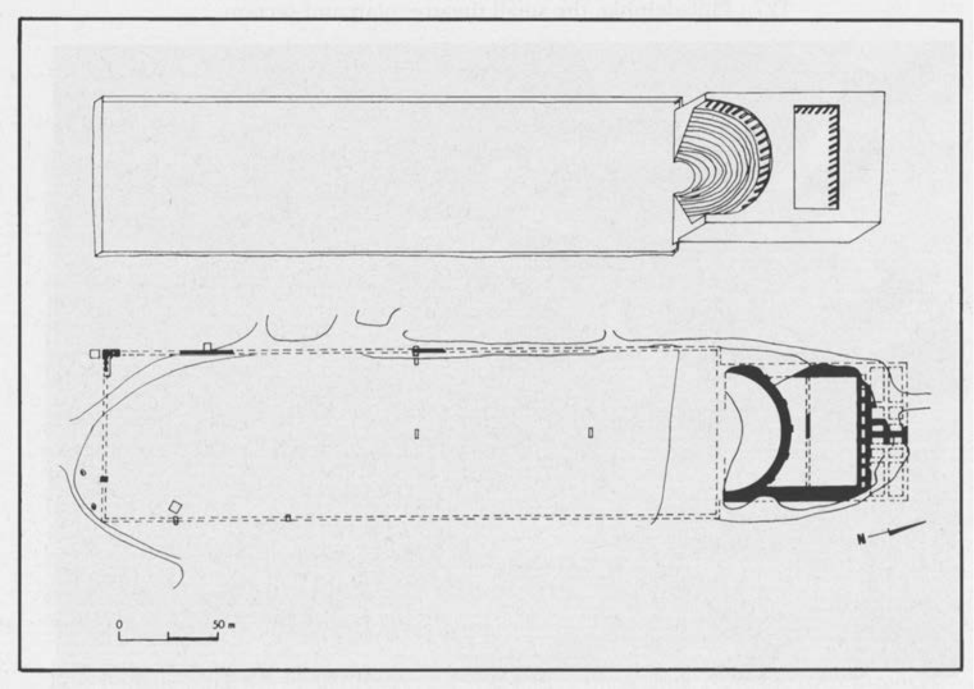


127. Philadelphia, the small theatre, plan and section.

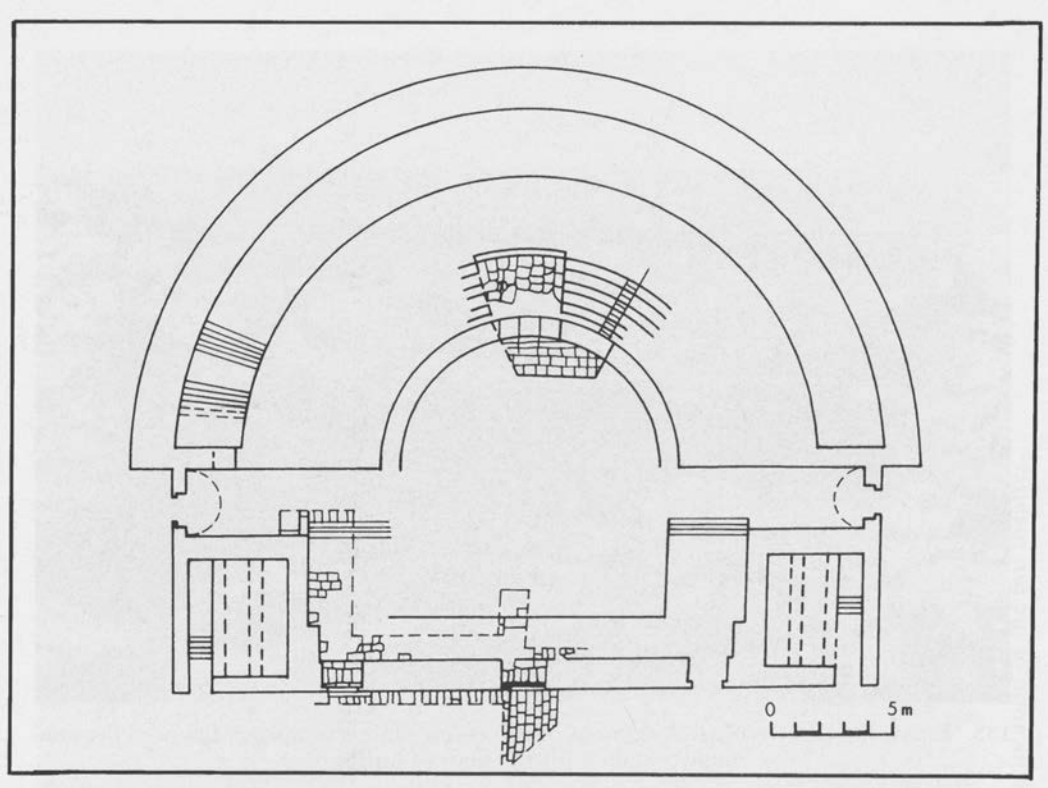
128. Philadelphia, the small theatre, segment of orchestra and lower part of ima cavea.



129. Jericho, the theatre combined with hippodrome, general view.

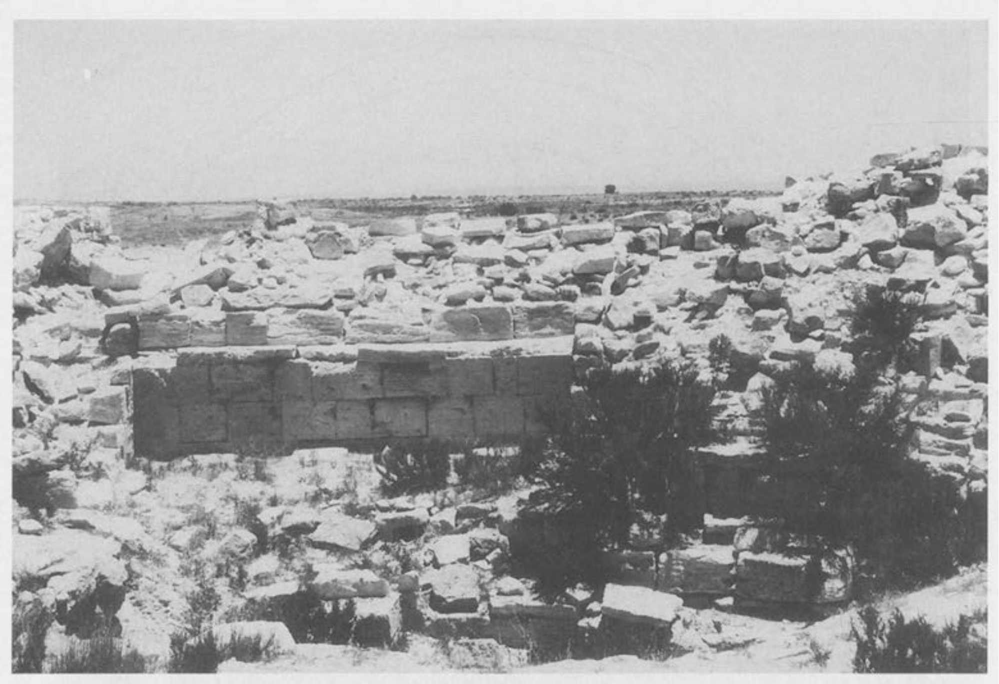


130. Jericho, the theatre combined with hippodrome, plan and suggested reconstruction.



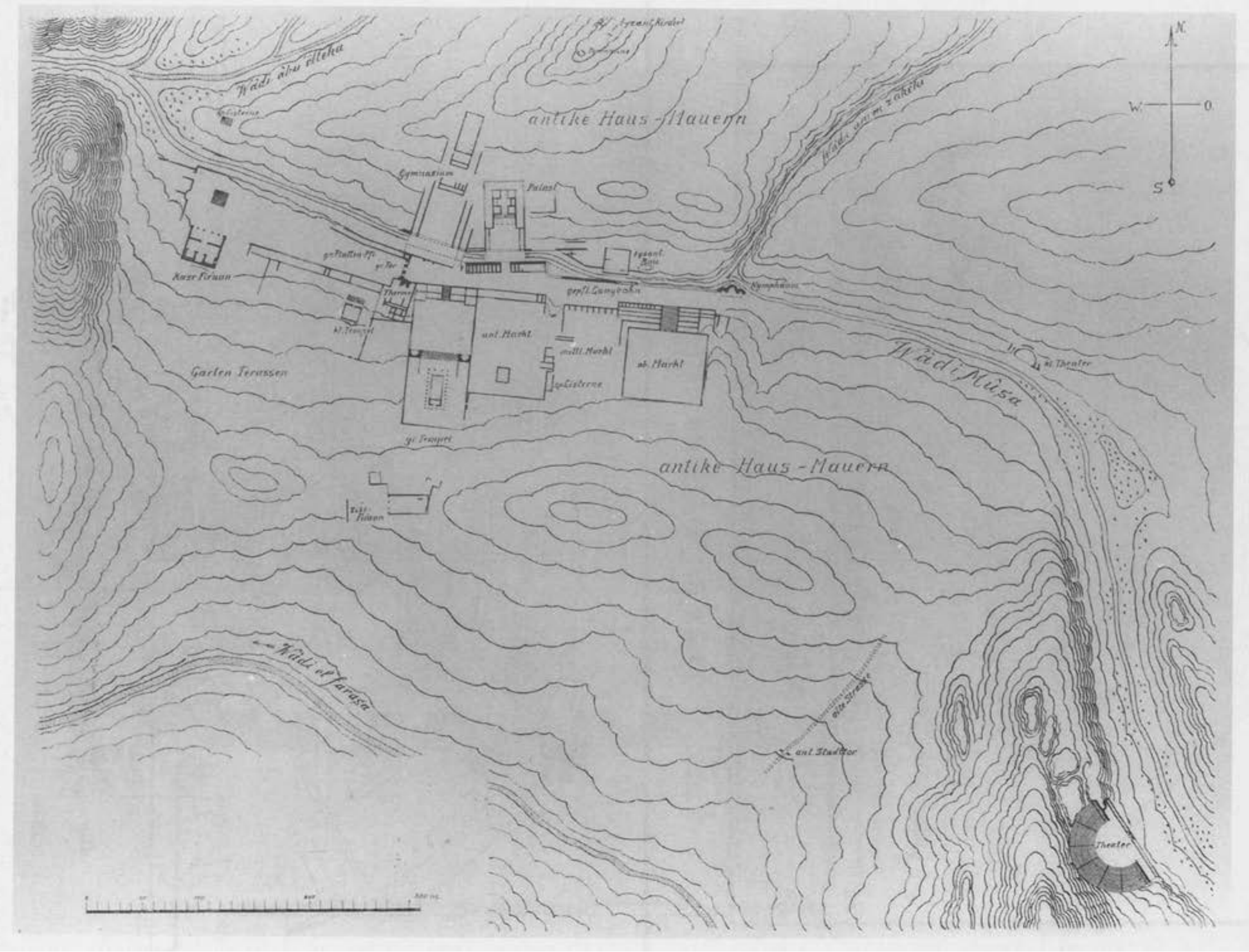
131. Elusa, the theatre, a plan.

132. Elusa, the theatre, the rear supporting wall that surrounded the cavea.

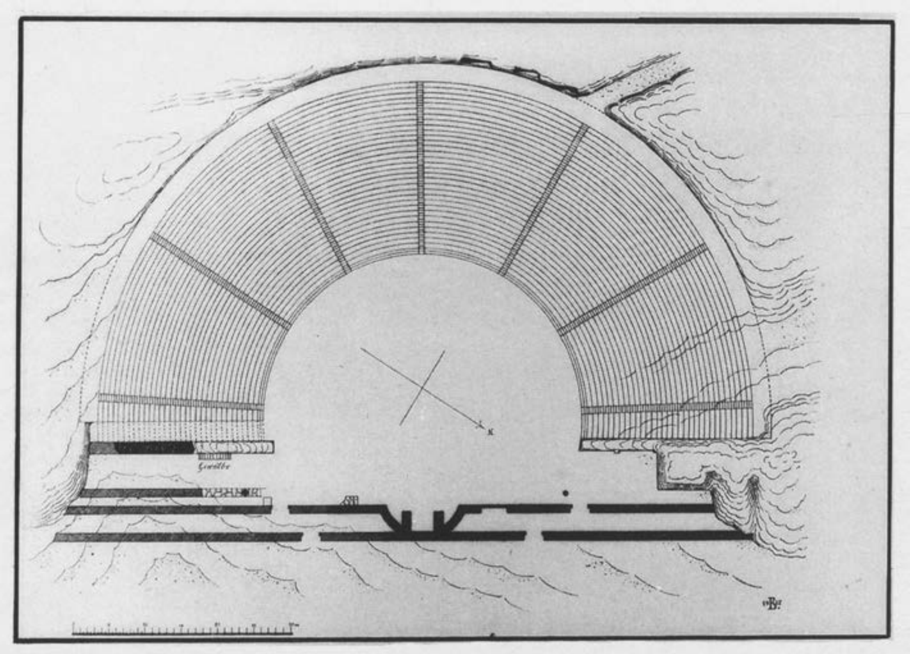


133. Elusa, the theatre central segment of the cavea. Note the square, flat area presumably designed for the seats of honour.

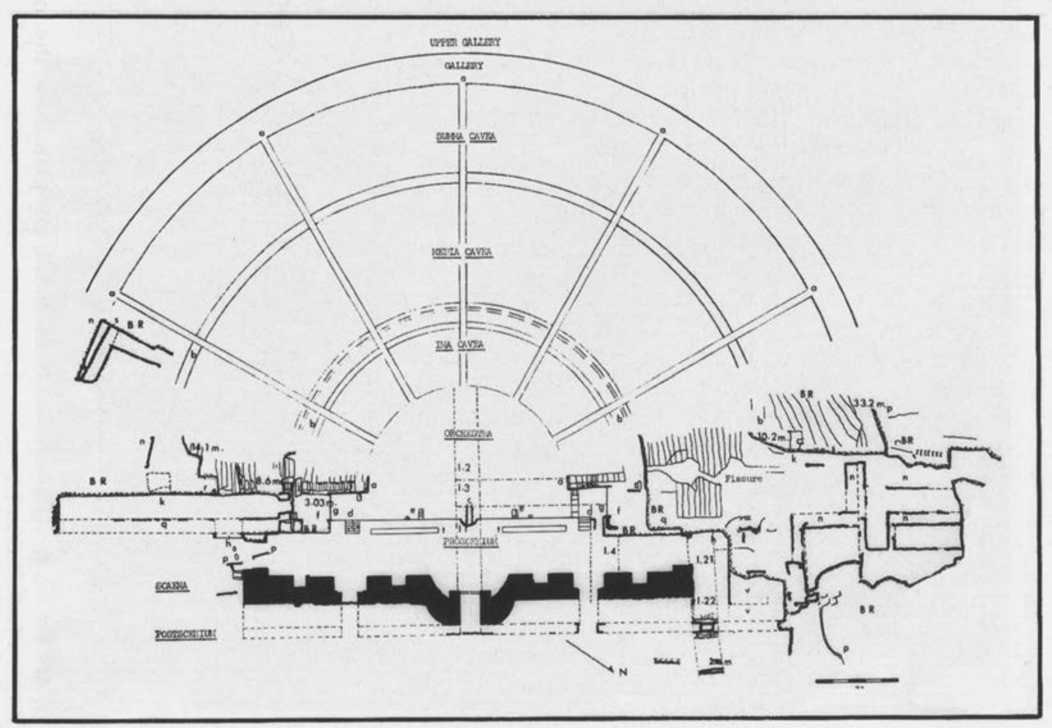
134. Elusa, the theatre, general view of the cavea.



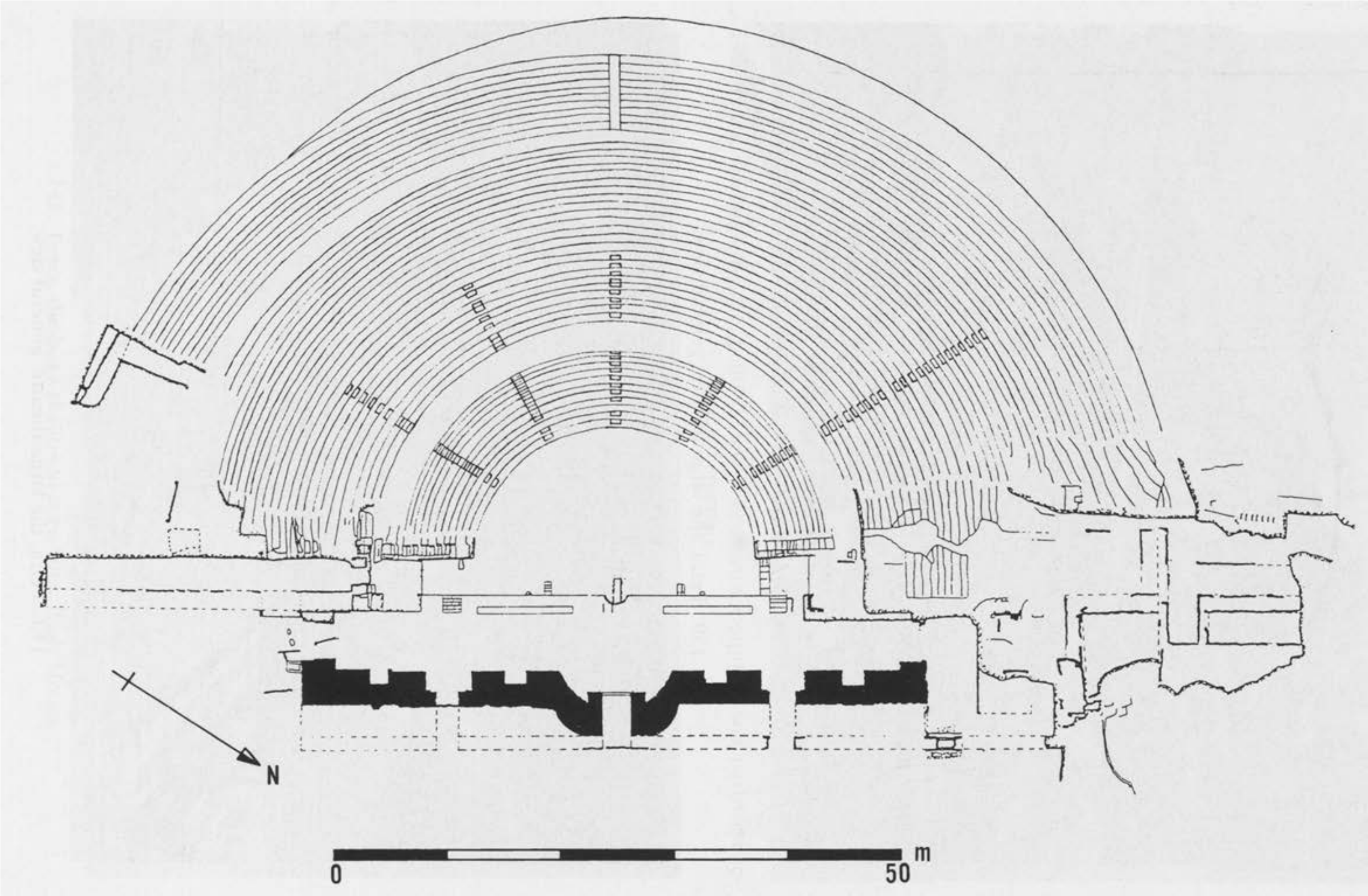
135. Petra, city-plan. Note the location of the two theatres.



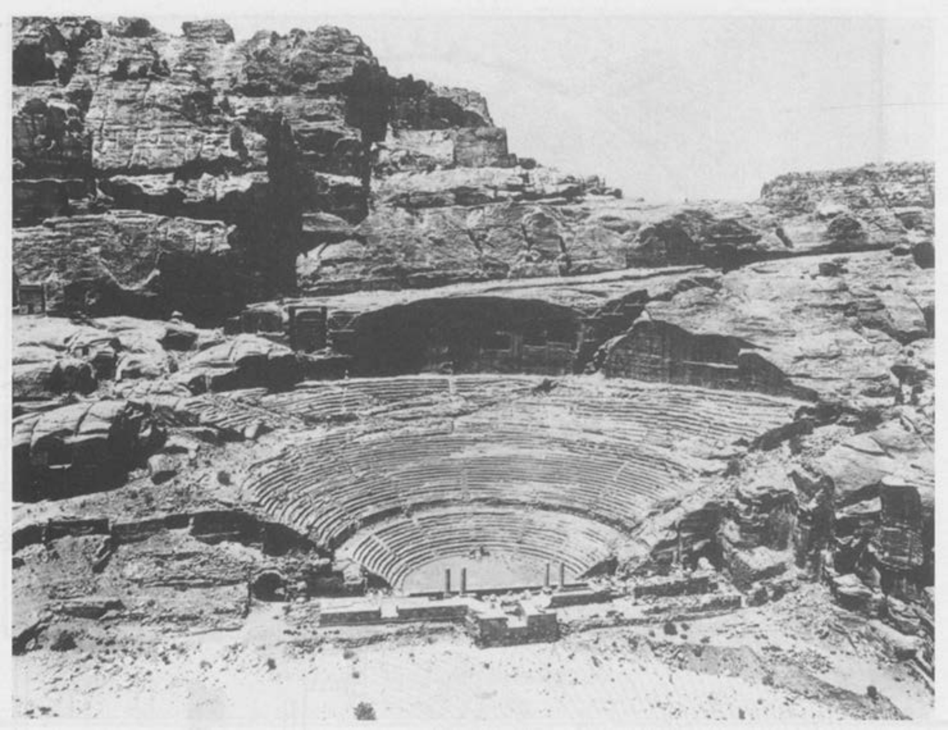
136. Petra, the large theatre, plan.



137. Petra, the large theatre, plan.



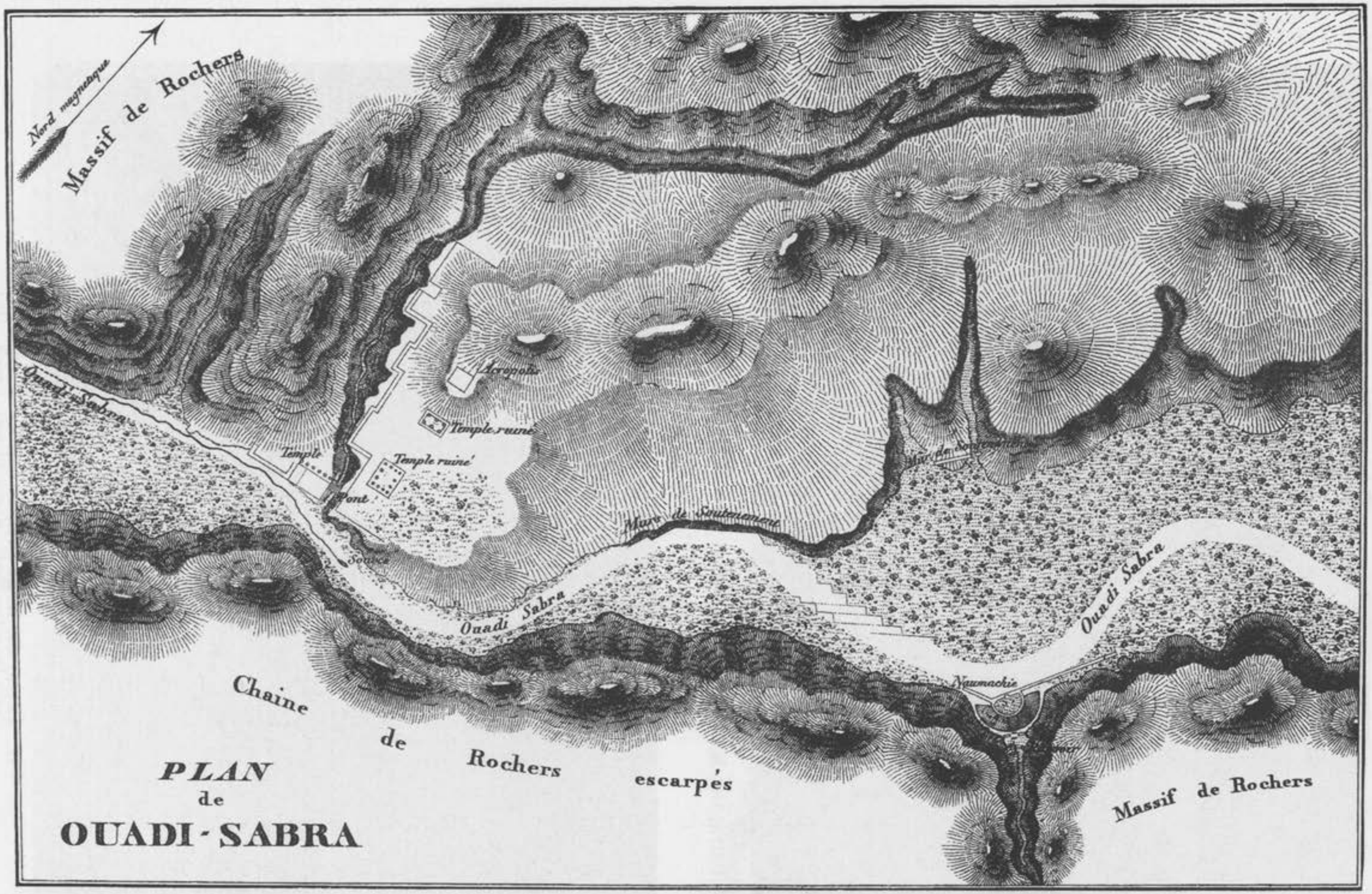
138. Petra, the large theatre, plan.


139. Petra, the large theatre, general view.

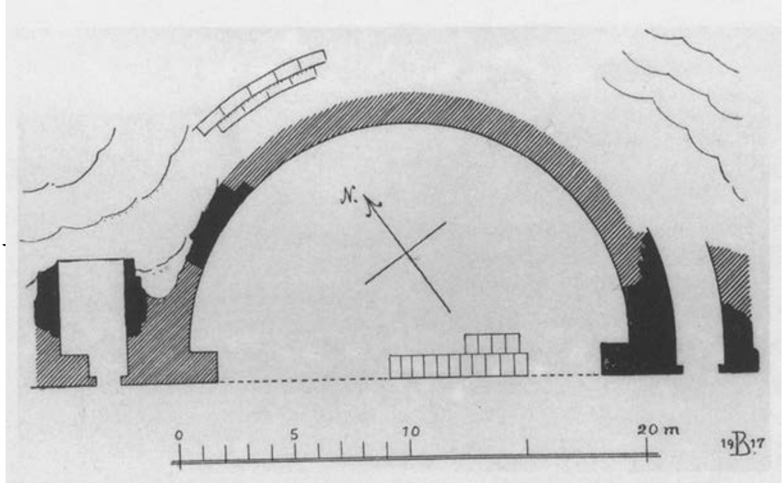
140. Petra, the large theatre, general view.

141. Petra, the large theatre, general view of orchestra, pulpitum and partly reconstructed scaena.

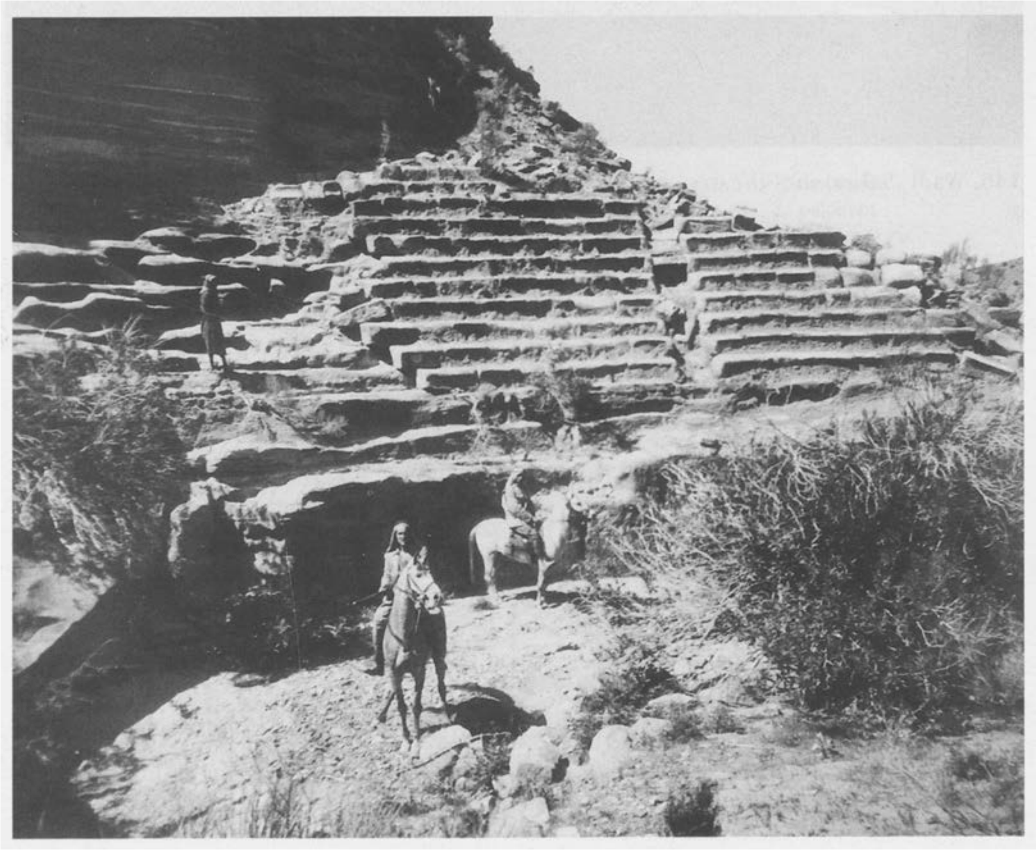
142. Petra, the large theatre as seen from Wadi Mousa.



143. Petra, the small theatre, plan.

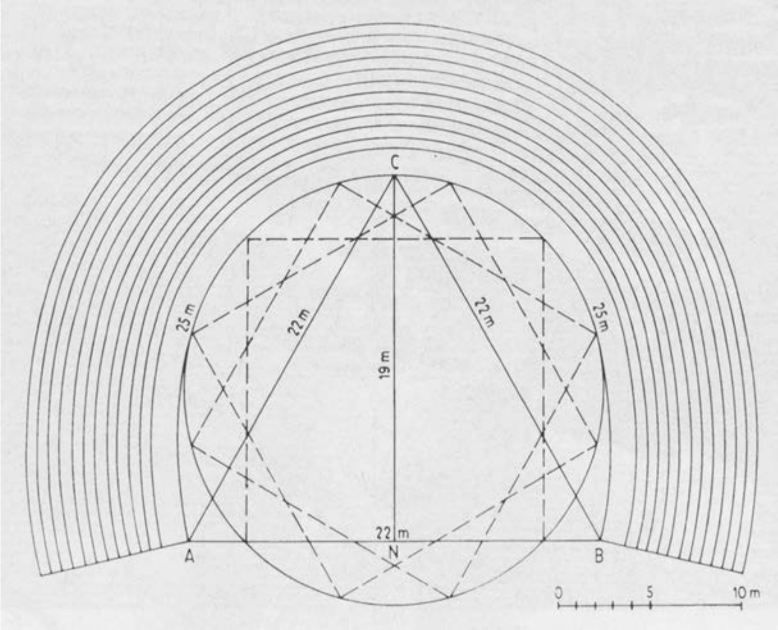


144. Wadi Sabra, a general plan of the Nabataean Sanctuary. Note the location of the theatre.

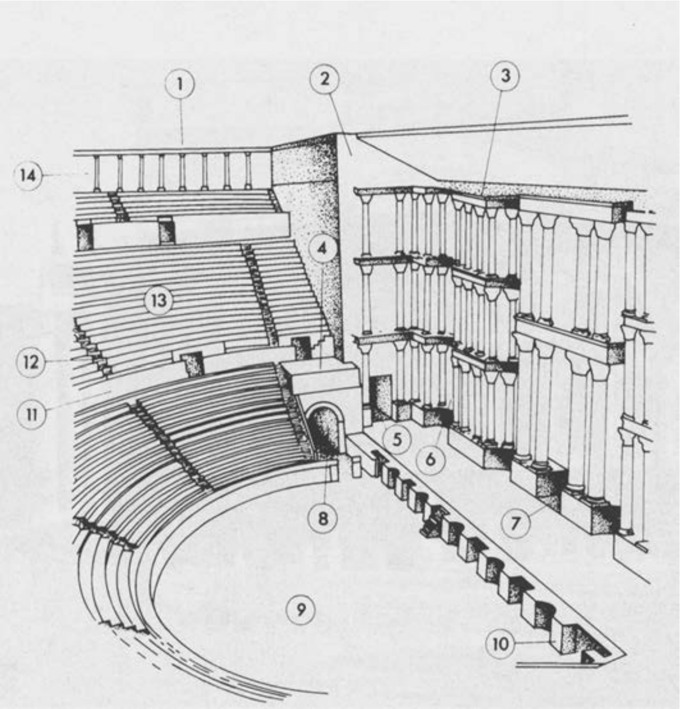


145. Wadi Sabra, the theatre. Note the high wall surrounding the orchestra.

146. Wadi Sabra, the theatre, general view of the cavea. Note the benches placed on the steps cut into the bedrock.

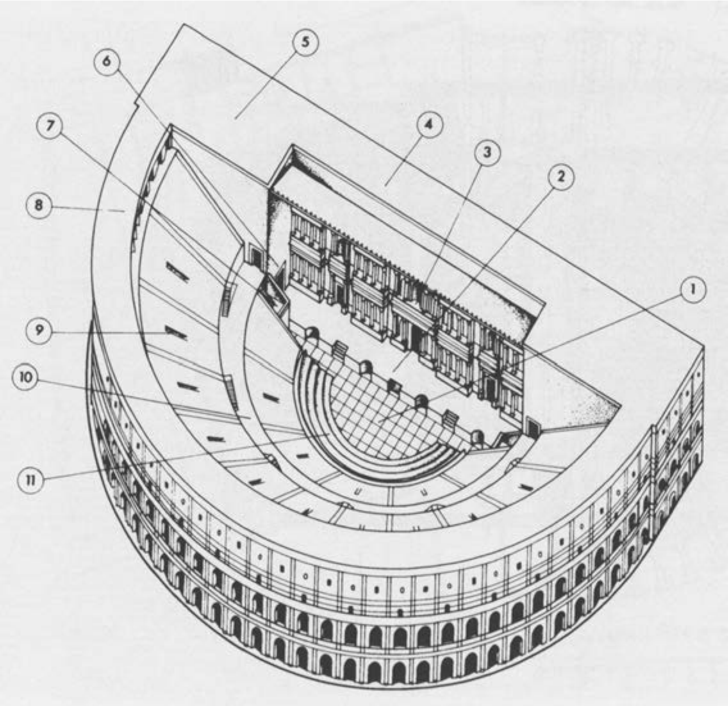


147. Wadi Sabra, plan of the theatre.



1. cavea
2. versura
3. scaenae frons
4. tribunal
5. itinera versurarum
6. hospitalia
7. valvae regiae
8. aditus maximus
9. orchestra
10. proscaenium
11. praecinctio
12. scalaria
13. cuneu
14. porticu

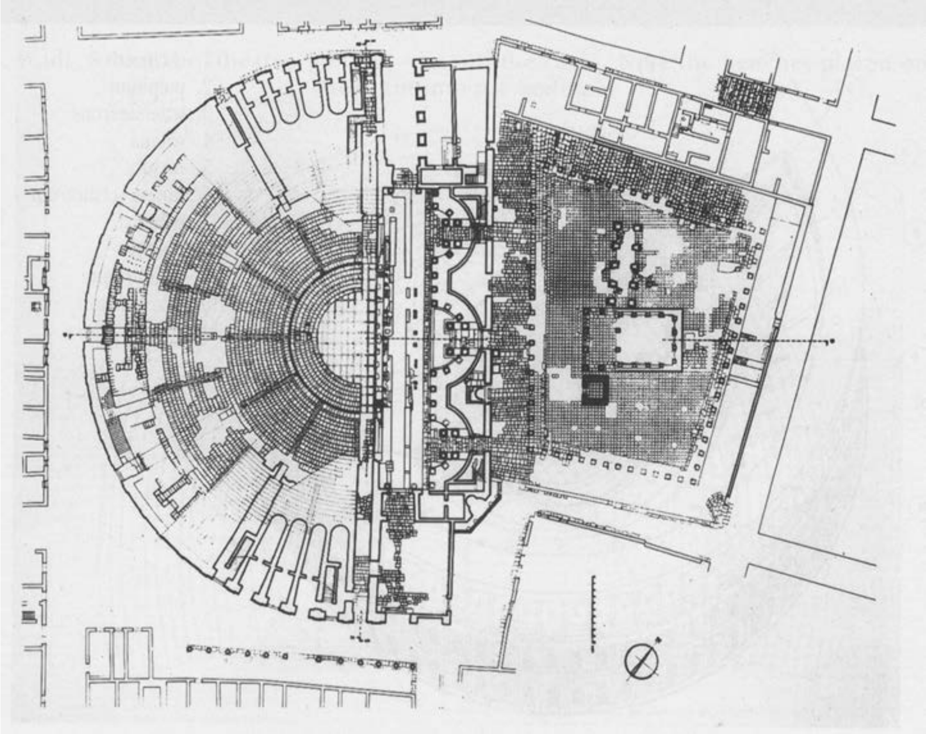
148. Typical Roman Theatre, interior view. Drawn by Z. Friedman.



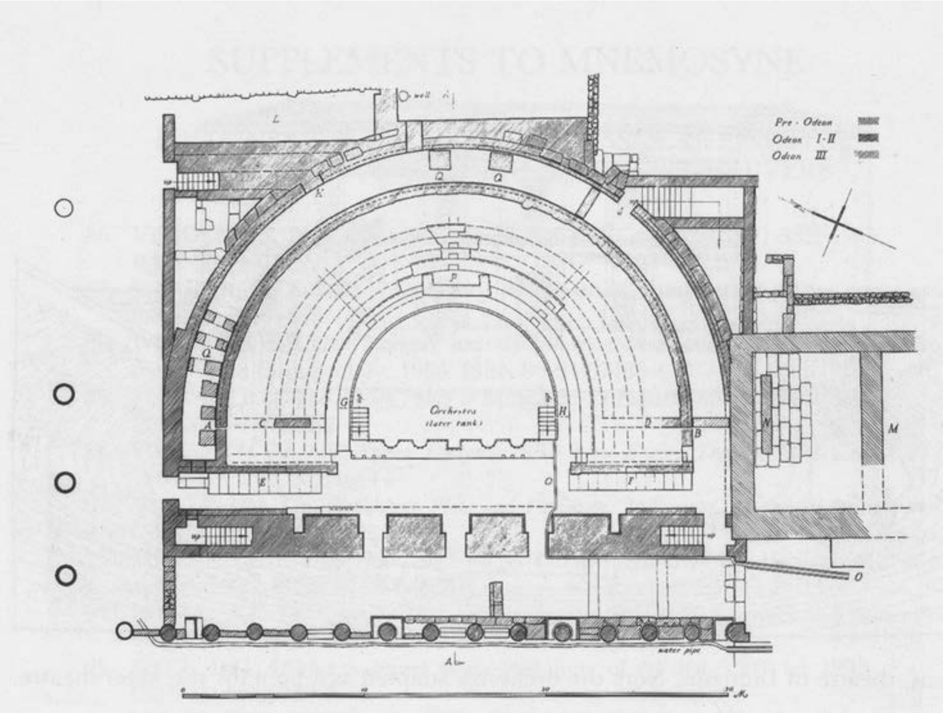
1. orchestra
2. pulpitum
3. scaenae frons
4. scaena
5. versura
6. itinera versurarum
7. tribunal
8. porticus
9. vomitorium
10. praecinctio
11. bisellia

149. Typical Roman Theatre, exterior view. Drawn by Z. Friedman.

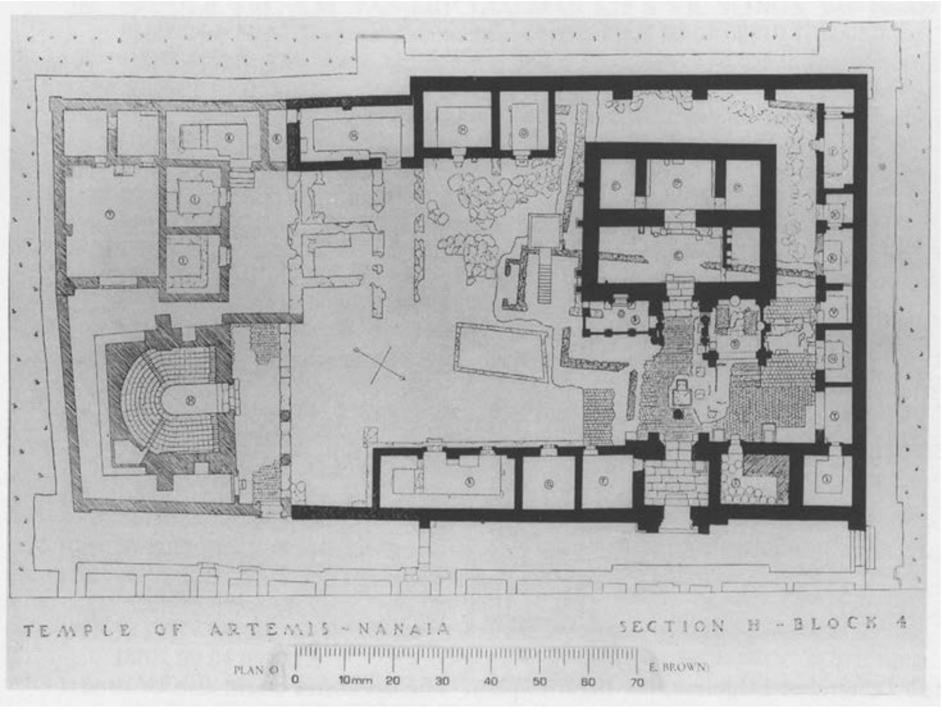
150. Rome, the theatre of Marcellus.



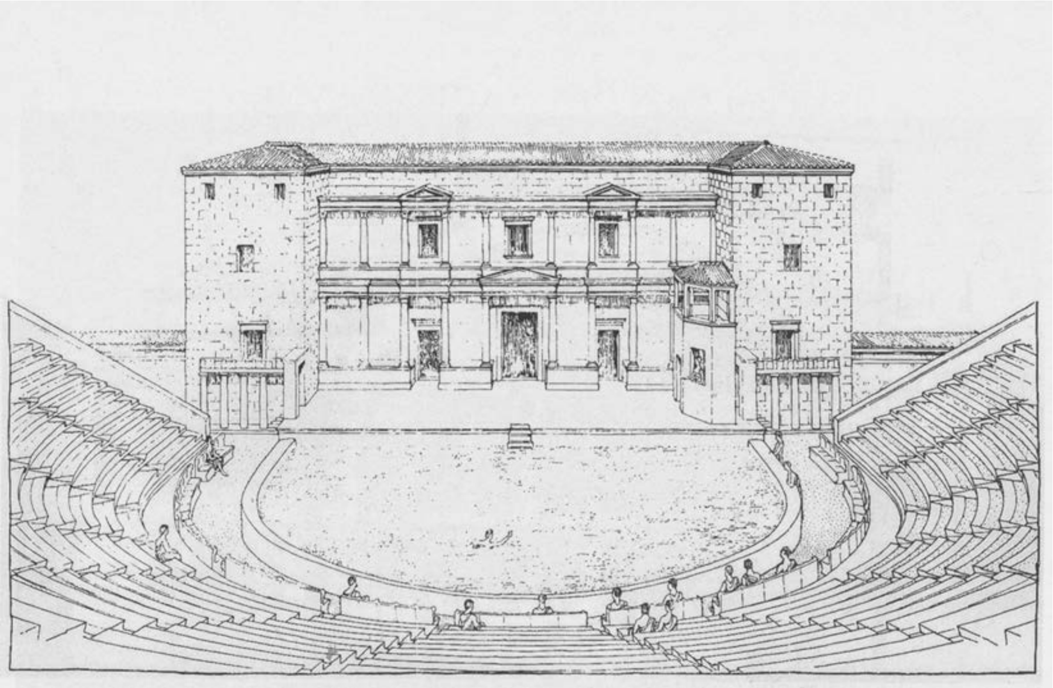
151. Leptis-Magna, plan of the theatre.



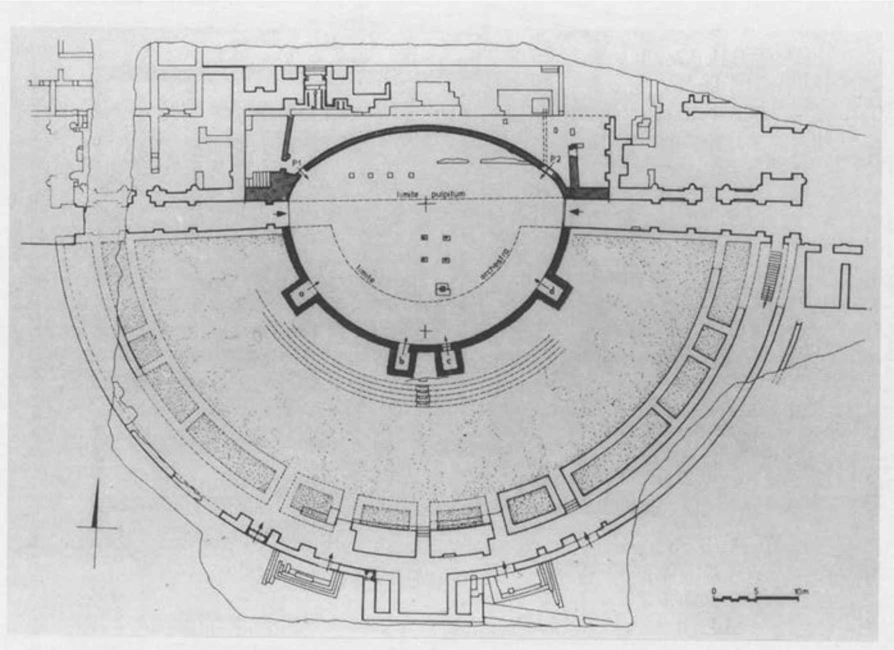
152. Ptolemais (Cyrenaica), the odeum, plan.



153. Dura-Europos, Artemis-Nanaia Temple. Note the theatre-like hall.



154. Athens, theatre of Dionysus. Note the orchestra adapted as a pool for the water-theatre.



155. Cherchel (Algeria), the theatre, plan. The orchestra could also be used as arena of the amphitheatre.